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A radical and his roots

Julian Symons

IRVING HOWE

A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography
352pp, Secker and Warburg, £10.
0 436 20022 6

"Don't you feel", John Berryman once asked Irving Howe, "that Rimbaud's chaos is central to your life?" He replied in the negative, as he had failed to share Delmore Schwartz's feeling that on some mornings he couldn't even bear to tie up his own shoelaces. Such expressions of preference for order over chaos, and of belief that he could manage the simple, practical affairs of life, made Howe an object of amused pity in those Princeton circles, "a nice fellow, but not one of the hallowed victims". But he was not cast down. "Berryman might have Rimbaud and chaos, but I had Marx and history."

Marx and history, or one might say more exactly Trotsky and radical politics, have been the guidelines of Irving Howe's life. Novelist, poet and critic who have taken a dip into politics and found the water too hot or too cold are familiar, but Howe is something much rarer in the United States and almost unknown in Britain, a man primarily involved throughout his life with politics who has retained a deep interest in literary creation. It is true that his interest is chiefly in the social aspect of such creation. His fine short essays on Stendhal, Dostoevsky, Conrad, Turgenev and Henry James are included in a book rightly called *Politics and the Novel*. He remains, in that book and in his many articles on American and European (but rarely British) novelists, basically a political writer, feeling the need to adopt a stance that is not purely literary. The need extends beyond literature, to everything that concerns the United States, American entry into World War Two, McCarthyism, Vietnam...

more often than not Howe worries about the stance's correctness, but the need to have an opinion about everything is one he would never question. It is an opinion passionately held, and a serious difference with a friend is likely to lead at best to coolness, often to a severance of relations. Thus, after a public debate about Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* in which Howe opposed Arendt's thesis, he met her at a party and extended his hand. "With a curt shake of the head and that bold grim smile of hers she turned on her heel and walked off." A typical British approach to cultural politics differs from that of the New York Jewish intellectuals. It is on a politer, less noisy level of discourse. It is also much less frank.

The sub-title "an intellectual autobiography" is doubly justified. Howe is pleased and even proud to accept the label "intellectual", and the book is personal only about ideas, not about the author's personal life. It tells us that Howe was born in 1920, and brought up in the poor Jewish community that crowded the East Bronx, that his father's grocery store went bankrupt in 1930 and thereafter both his parents worked in the dress trade. There is a moving, candid account near the end of the son's feelings on his father's death. And that is all. We do not learn whether Irving Howe was an only child, his wife is no more than mentioned, and his son Nicholas appears on the last page. This is the life of an American radical, not of a husband or father.

Howe's later life and attitudes have been coloured by the fact that he entered the Trotskyist movement in his teens, remained active in it until called up in 1942 for Army service, and was a passive supporter for some years after the war was over. The movement at this time had, like most sectarian groups, a Left and a Right wing which split on the issue of the nature (in 1940) of the Russian state. Was it still a "workers' state" although a degen-

erate one, or had it moved into a phase of "bureaucratic collectivism", neither capitalist nor socialist? James P. Cannon, the Right-wing leader, was a power-politician who would have been perfectly at home in the Communist Party, from which indeed he had been expelled. His rival Max Schachtman was a brilliant speaker and polemicist. When Schachtman paid a brief, perhaps surreptitious, visit to England he impressed all those he met by his wit and quick-mindedness. When the split came the young Howe went off with Schachtman, and worked for the group's weekly paper, *Labour Action*. The Cannon rival paper was named *Millitant*.

It is a tribute to Howe's narrative skill that he is able to make these manoeuvres interesting, and to convey the verve and excitement of a time when, for the young, everything seemed possible. CCNY, the City College of New York, was filled with Trotskyists in Alcove 1, a space "dark-stained, murky, shaped like a squat horseshoe, one of perhaps ten along the edge of the lunchroom". The more numerous Stalinists were nearby in Alcove 2, but it was in Alcove 1 that you could walk in at any time and find "an argument about the Popular Front in France, the New Deal in America, the civil war in Spain, the Five-Year Plan in Russia... here ideas simulated the color of reality, here we defended the 'correct line', that mystic pride of Marxism." Intellectual disciplines were strict, for in these years the American Trotskyist movement attracted many good minds. The argument between James Burnham and Trotsky about bureaucratic collectivism, carried on in the *Fourth International* and the *New Internationalist*, the movement's theoretical monthlies, was conducted on a high level. Trotsky's reply to Burnham (Trotsky supported the Cannonites) was called "From a Scratch to a Gangrene", a title felt to be justified when within a few months (not years, as is said here) Burnham

had propounded his theory of the managerial revolution. Howe does not overstate the case when he says that training in the movement "taught us to grasp the structure of an argument... to speak and think, and to value discipline of mind." Nothing similar could be said of the British Trotskyist movement, then or now.

It was a training that prepared the young Howe, after Army service where in Alaska he caught a glimpse of Dashiell Hammett, for entry into the literary world as critic and social commentator. Or rather, into the New York Jewish literary world, for in that place at that time it was positively an advantage to be Jew, and conscious of it. The first literary article mentioned here is about a novel by Isaac Rosenfeld, in which Howe writes of a scene "that impinges upon my own life - as so many other Jewish readers will feel". A Jew was particularly in tune with this time, when many Americans were struggling to come to terms with the realities of the holocaust, and to understand its meaning. It was peculiarly difficult even for first-generation immigrants, brought up in a country where they believed that "here the Jews at least had a chance" to comprehend the concept of the holocaust, the deliberate design to kill every Jew who could be found. The need for "explanations" like Hannah Arendt's perverse and tortuous theory that the Jews collaborated in their own destruction, that (to overstate a little) they truly desired their own deaths, was strong, as it could never have been in Europe. It moved Howe to assert his solidarity with specifically Jewish literary traditions, and to collaborate in editing English translations of Jewish works. It moves him also to acceptance of the idea that something he vaguely calls radical evil exists in human nature. Such passages, uncharacteristically uncertain in tone, are among the weakest in the book. The radicalism Howe still retains does not permit consideration of the idea

that the message spelled out by the concentration camps is that the behaviour of human beings who possess complete power over others is almost never humane, and that any view of modern society should take account of this. Where concentration camps have been set up, where torture is practised as a matter of policy, there will be no lack of torturers. It is not too much reality that humankind is unable to bear, but too much freedom.

Howe lacked a degree, so that an academic post seemed out of his reach. He made a living post-war by writing for *Commentary*, for Dwight Macdonald's *Politics*, which was founded in 1944 and lasted five years until Macdonald found it drained his energies too much (or simply tired of it), for *Partisan Review* - and, with some twinges of conscience, for *Time*, which paid more than all the others put together for his occasional reviews. On *Politics* Howe did editorial chores, including a magazine chronicle under the name of Theodore Dryden, said to be a ferret-breeder from Long Island. He was paid \$15 a week, and found his editor "a hard boss, charmingly irascible, at once bright and silly". The silliness is easy to believe, given the variations and digressions of Macdonald's free-wheeling career, but it is not particularlyized, and the portraits of other friends and acquaintances are also rather inadequate. Howe's turns of phrase are often forceful and vivid, but he lacks the capacity - or perhaps the desire - for revealing portraiture of physical appearance and habits. *Partisan Review* paid almost as badly as *Politics* - Orwell got \$10 an article for most of his "London Letters" - but it was, Howe says, "the vibrant center of our intellectual life", and no doubt he would have been happy to write in it unpaid.

He came to the magazine in the late 1940s, when the great years were over. For perhaps six years, from the end of 1937 onwards, *Partisan Review* was a

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paradigm of what a literary-political magazine should be, aggressively but undomestically concerned with all the issues of the day, respecting but not revering established names, yet alert for any hint of creative promise showing above ground. The editors - Macdonald, Philip Rahv, William Phillips, George L. K. Morris, and others from year to year - searched their own souls often enough not to be accused of complacency but not so frequently as to seem fascinated chiefly by their navels. Turning the pages one might find a poem by Eliot, an article by Trotsky, memorable stories by Trilling, Wilson, Delmore Schwartz, poems by Auden and Stevens, the arrival of a sparkling new theatre critic named Mary McCarthy. Almost every issue contained also a minority or theme-setting article by one or other of the editors, about the twilight of the Thirties, cultural Bolshevism, Fascism as a possible "New Order", the intellectual failure of nerve (a retreat from scientific rationalism into obscurity), the future of democratic values.

Such editorial perceptiveness lasts only for a brief time, a historic moment when everything flows in harmony. Although harmony is hardly the right word, since the *Partisan* editors and chief contributors were so often in a bubbling stew of argument. "The only time all the *Partisan* writers came together, except for a rare meeting to draft some statement of protest, was at the parties Rahv or Phillips gave two or three times a year, gatherings of seventy-five to a hundred people that resembled a bazaar more than a social event. Here alliances were struck up or down, deals clinched, quarrels reheated. Milling about in the drafty rooms of the West Village, the PR writers distributed pieces of gossip, weighed prestige ratings, fought over politics. "How does the myth of the golden age, at least a golden minute, in which writers share ideas and ideals" an age or minute succeeded by a fall, and adds wittily: "It's a nice story, but while I witnessed the fall, I'm not sure there was ever a garden." Perhaps not; but ponderous Rahv, erratic Macdonald and the

others fashioned out of their quarrels and overstatements what was for a few years a marvellous magazine. What a fine stroke it was, for instance, to pick Orwell as writer of the London Letters. It is disagreeable but not surprising to be told that "a distinguished literary lady" (at this distance of time she could surely be named) called the Howe who had audaciously scaled the *Partisan* heights "a Jew-boy in a hurry".

The political and Jewish themes recur constantly - when, for instance, Howe had become a figure of sufficient distinction to be considered for an academic post in spite of the missing degree. In 1952 an invitation to apply for a post at Sarah Lawrence was followed by a series of interviews with faculty members. "Greenest of the green at this ritual, I wondered why some greeted me with endless questions, while others smiled politely and let me pass." After rejection he learned that the polite smiles were Stalinist fellow-travellers unprepared even to consider a man who retained his membership in Schachtman's group. Acceptance came from Brandeis University, after a committee meeting conducted in Yiddish when Howe was working on translations with a Yiddish poet. The recently-founded Brandeis was essentially a Jewish university, although Clematis like the poet J. V. Cunningham were on the faculty. Its students were the "children of the children of City College, erratic, cocky, shy, arrogant", with "the quarrelsome love of politics and literature that had been handed down to their overburdened parents." They were in training to be *Partisan* Reviewers, it might be said. Howe evidently felt at home there as perhaps he has never done since. He compares Brandeis favourably with "the genteel anti-Semitism" and effortlessly superior tone of Harvard at the time. Perhaps it was the tone that rankled most, apparent at moments like that when he was introduced to a visiting Italian novelist at a Cambridge reception as "one of our more promising younger literary journalists". A generous-minded man himself (in his collection *Celebrations and Attacks* the celebrations are whole-

hearted, the attacks mostly mild). Howe is easily wounded by lack of generosity in others.

The recent years have been mostly a success story, and since success is less interesting than struggle, they are less vivid than the days of Trotsky and *Partisan*. But although Howe is now Dislinguished Professor at CCNY he has hardly sunk into academic ease. He was one of the founders of the lively magazine *Dissent*, spent two miserable years at Stanford from which he emerged longing for New York and feeling that California offered only "a second-rate culture". He survived both McCarthyism and the student troubles of the 1960s without doing anything to be ashamed of, and in the 70s had what he modestly calls his fifteen minutes of fame when his study of East European Jewish immigrants to America, *World of Our Fathers*, became a best-seller.

Has success spoiled Irving Howe? No, but he emerges from these pages as a man clinging to beliefs about human behaviour that time has not justified, something particularly apparent in his attitude to the student attempt to overthrow all academic authority in the 1960s. He disapproves, as many do in retrospect, of what he calls the "authoritarian debauch" of the New Left, abetted by academics whom he names "guerrillas with tenure". He gives instances of student excesses. Yet in spite of the instances and the hard words he cannot bring himself altogether to condemn the nihilism of Mark Rudd, Tom Hayden and their friends, the revolt not simply or even chiefly against conservative attitudes, but against the existence of any academic standards at all. One might expect him to squash these blowflies of radicalism as, long ago, his hero Max Schachtman had destroyed Earl Browder in debate. He takes refuge instead in *perhaps*. Perhaps he and his colleagues on *Dissent* mishandled their meetings with the students, perhaps there was something in "participatory democracy" (that is, everybody voting about everything all the time), perhaps these were good and sincere young people who because of Vietnam or for some other reason went too far. Perhaps, perhaps. It is not to Howe but to Diana Trilling ("On the Steps of



Irving Howe, photographed by Jerry Bauer

Low Library") that we must look for total candour about the student activities of those years, and their basic meaning.

Well, such flinching is a tribute to a kind heart if not to a disciplined mind. *A Margin of Hope* is the record of an admirable life, the testimony of a decent, honest man. The final beliefs of this battered survivor from the American literary-political civil wars of forty years are stated almost at the end of the book. They are words expressing modest enough aspirations, but they still give justification to his title:

"Will Socialism in America ever be more than a marginal phenomenon? I hope so, but am far from sure. Perhaps it does not finally answer what matters is that the moral impulse that drove people to become socialists should find expression, with a fresh vocabulary, on behalf of a fresh humanism. . . . Just as there would be an especially acute need for such critics, both anarchist and conservative, in a socialist society, there is a special need in capitalist society for socialist critics offering an alternative vision of human possibility."

R.K. NARAYAN

Malgudi Days
11pp. Heinemann. £7.50.
0 334 40028 6
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WILLIAM WALSH
R.K. Narayan: A Critical Appreciation
11pp. Heinemann. £7.95.
0 334 48150 1

In a recent interview for the remarkably comprehensive Radio 3 series, *India: A Cacophony of Cultures*, R. A. Narayan spoke of his philosophical affinity with Graham Greene (a friendly message from whom appears on both the newly published volumes of Narayan's fiction).

We have a similar technique of chopping off, you know. Every day before he has about 300 words ready he probably writes a great deal more than that. I do that myself. I can safely say that my readers don't skip anything I write. I can probably put a hand across the front page jacket, *No Need For Rapid-Reading Course*.

In the days when he was his own publisher, Narayan might indeed have made such a gesture of salesmanship. Of all English-language fictioneers - if we except those cheerfully shameless writers who will sell their stories door-to-door - Narayan is currently the one who most closely resembles a tradesman. Though conscious of, and delighting in, an international reputation, he clearly enjoys being one of the Indian craftsmen among many. Accordingly, he writes not so much to construct a career as to maintain the viability of a small business.

Narayan is noted for his plain-speaking accounts of the writer's job, another version of which he supplies in his introduction to the short-story collection *Malgudi Days*. This time he comes his technique revealingly with the temperament of the Indian nation:

The short story affords a writer a welcome diversion from hard work. . . . Unlike the novel, which emerges from relevant, minutely worked-out detail, the short story can be brought into existence through a mere suggestion of detail, the focus being kept on a central idea or climax. . . . The material available to a story writer in India is limitless. Within a broad climate of inherited culture there are endless variations: every individual differs from every other individual, not only economically but in outlook, habits and day-to-day philosophy. It is stimulating to live in a society that is not standardized or mechanized, and is free from monotony. Under such conditions the writer has only to look out of the window in order to pick up a character (and thereby a story).

Readers of *Malgudi Days*, a collection drawing on two volumes previously unpublished in Britain or America, with some new stories added at the end, will acknowledge that this simple programme has been straightforwardly fulfilled. Narayan's central figures - from students to snake-charmers, doctors to astrologers - give exactly that sense of having been picked out of a crowded street, pursued until their fate achieves a momentary focus, and then allowed to fall back again into the cultural cacophony. Of the thirty-two stories amassed here, several can be imagined as quick-fire jokes: the professional knife-grinder who flees in terror from the vasectomy clinic; the pickpocket arrested while actually trying to replace a wallet in its owner's pocket; the trusting and complaisant guard-dog, optimistically named "Attila", who befriends a burglar instead of apprehending him, and yet by his very faithfulness to the malefactor betrays him to the authorities - though even in such a simple tale as this there is a disconcertingly equivocal tone, in the sense that authorial sympathy is distributed with perfect impartiality between the housebreaker, Ranga, and the household pet.

Narayan has at least two ready-made audiences: readers who regret the

distance of his turbulent Western fiction has put between itself and its folk-tale origins, and those with a hunger for unusual social detail. The latter will find a great deal to delight them in his short stories. Certain legendarily vexatious Indian locations, such as the doctor's surgery or the over-full railway compartment, are, as he remarks in his introduction, a gift to the observant writer and a stimulus to his own sense of humour ("The compartment built to seat 8 passengers; 4 British Troops, or 6 Indian Troops", now carried only nine. "Much play is made with letters that arrive or do not arrive, or are held back by an artful postman, or snatched back at the last moment by the repentant sender. While perfectly believable in the context of modern India's notorious inefficiency, these devices have the rather charming additional effect of reminding the Western reader of pre-Victorian conditions in his own culture. In spite of the efforts of the Post Office, it is some time since British authors were able to get much credible plot-advancement out of messages lost, late, stolen or intercepted.

As for the folk-tale, some of the earlier pieces in the *Malgudi* collection show an evident kinship with that tradition; some, like "Such Perfected" (about a craftsman in statuary who creates a too-perfect image that seemingly cannot be accepted by either man or god until it has sustained some minute propitiatory damage), suggest to the European sensibility something of a Grecian parable. But it is rare for Narayan to come so close to didacticism. He does not deal in exemplary fables, and the Western novel's machinery of retribution is far too grandiose for him. His characters can scarcely be said to be suspended between any moral poles at all, let alone the Good and Bad with which we are most familiar. If there is such a polarity to be deduced from Narayan's small-town universe, it operates between much vaguer extremes, both of which are acceptable: the propitious and the unfortunate. His doctrine is one of equanimity and unarousal - what many Western readers find most

appealing in his work. When Graham Greene writes of having found "a second home" in Narayan (whom he names as the English-language novelist he most admires since the death of Evelyn Waugh), one can be sure that what he finds most comforting is the absence of Manichean Christianity and the doctrine of salvation. In Narayan's world, scores are not settled but dissolved, recycled, restated. "Both of us will shed our forms soon and perhaps we could meet again, who knows? So goodbye for the present." These are the concluding words of the novel *A Tiger For Malgudi*, but they constitute a universal epilogue one could append to most of Narayan's fiction.

To object to the equanimity of Narayan's work would be to take on the entire cultural tradition of India. But many observers in the West (and some on the left of Indian politics) do make just such an objection, judging the mood of religious resignation so dominant in the philosophy of the sub-continent to be no more than a picturesque disguise for political inertia - even, on occasion, for callous indifference. European narrative in particular is accustomed to a more sceptical and activist view of humankind than the one Narayan recently gave in the Radio 3 interview: "Most of the men and women around are very pleasant-minded, you know. . . . normally very tolerant and not demanding too much of their surroundings. That's why you see so many who don't exercise their rights at all, I mean civic matters and so on, they don't care. It's probably part of philosophy of acceptance." As indeed is that analysis itself.

The newer stories in the *Malgudi* collection are comparatively verbose - twelve pages a time instead of three - but it seems to matter little to this author's narrative style whether the conclusion is two pages or two hundred pages away. The result is a story-telling tactic that takes little account of standard matchings of tension and release, but offers instead a frieze-like quality, occasionally gathering itself into a noisily decorative knot, much as the village populace gathers round the site of some abnormal incident. The fact that the narrator of *A Tiger For Malgudi* is Raja the tiger himself, which in some literary contexts might be thought very daring, is actually of no great consequence in the text itself, (except at those odd moments when spillover logic makes one ask how the tiger, who is asleep, can possibly be in a position to tell us what is happening outside the schoolroom as he has summarily appropriated as his bedchamber). Raja swipes off the head of a tiresome trainer, if anything, more matter-of-factly than I am able to set it down here. The effect is bracing. Fable is not often allowed the run of the novelistic game-plan in this way. But whether the full range of satisfactions the novel makes possible are available in a work like this strikes me as more debatable.

Narayan is a kind of tapestry-artist: to him the pattern is all, and he sees it everywhere. (In his *Malgudi Days* introduction he speaks of spotting *Malgudi* characters even in New

York.) In his way, he is a safe custodian of the traditional Hindu belief that no single human life can be expected to body forth any very important purpose. Static and essentially simple, his work is nonetheless ornate, like Indian sculpture. English-language academics, hungry both for orderliness and a sense of organic narrative growth, have tried to reconstitute the full-scale picture they feel sure Narayan must somewhere have in mind. Even a topographical picture will do: Narayan's announces delightedly that "the University of Chicago Press has published a literary atlas with a map of India indicating the location of *Malgudi*" and the frontispiece of *Malgudi Days* is a map of the township itself "faithfully redrawn for publication by Clarice Borio from the original constructed by Dr. James M. Fennelly of Adelphi University to illustrate his paper *The City of Malgudi as an Expression of the Ordered Hindu Cosmos*, delivered at the American Academy of Religion International Region Conference, 1978". One can imagine with what amusement Narayan sees his work voyaging the world gathering such academic barnacles.

A more sizeable encrustation is William Walsh's critical appreciation, which is full of extremely mild paradox, tenderly contrasted non-opposites, tactful adjectival groping for the middle way. Narayan's work is deemed "kind but unsentimental, mocking but uncynical, profoundly Indian but distinctively individual." Things "are seen with a kind of attentive tolerance and ironic gentleness in a way which never interferes with the accurate, sympathetic, unussy registration of experience". It is perhaps not surprising that Walsh, given a momentary chance to escape from this otherwise unavoidable cycle of hailing and dispassionate moderation, seizes it almost too eagerly, writing off Narayan's non-fictional activities with the brusqueness of a Personnel Manager: "The manipulation of generous and the practice of literary criticism, the prosecution of a theoretical or educational argument . . . are not activities he has ever achieved much skill in."

Walsh, however, is clearly right when he remarks of an earlier Narayan novel that "The universe presented . . . is much less discontinuous, more intimately interwoven part with part than ours. The life which flows through it is more single and unbroken than that distributed through ours". To some this is welcome news, to others not. Personally, I count myself among those who treasure the tradition of the novel as an attempt to establish, in as many different circumstances as history permits, what is worthwhile about individuality. A tradition that is ultimately content to dissolve individuality in order to reabsorb it into the continuum holds less interest for me. Relentless pursuit of justifications for the self may of course take its toll in time, driving the exhausted salvation-seeker, Greene-like, into the entirely passive embrace of the law of karma. Mr Narayan awaits our arrival, sympathetic and motionless at his window.

In *The Hole in the Wall*, Arthur Morrison's classic Thameside shocker (179pp. Bodley Press. £4.95. 0 85115 25 8), Stephen Kemp, its eight-year-old hero, passes, on the death of his mother, into the care of Grandfather Nat, licensee of the picturesque eponymous pub in Wapping; and there, like Jim Hawkins in the apple barrel, he learns of the evil ways of men. Rich Dickensian descriptions of waterside life in the 1870s are allied to a melodramatic plot and larger-than-life characters such as Blind George, Musky Mag and the villainous Dan Ogie whose come-appearance makes Bill Sikes's passing look relatively peaceful. Morrison, an East Ender, appeared first in 1822, a year after the publication of *Anna of the Fair Isle*. Like the better-known working-class community from the history of a small Yorkshire community from 1760 to the first decades of the nineteenth century, as seen through Fawcett's eyes, the world of municipal jobbery and snobbery has a timeless air. There are useful notes to guide the reader through the Scots dialect.

J. K. L. Walker

Applying the lever

William J. Fishman

STUART A. COHEN

English Zionists and British Jews: The communal politics of Anglo-Jewry, 1895-1920
349pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £24.30.
0 691 05361 8

The emergence of anti-Semitism as a political force in France (the Dreyfus Affair), Austria, Germany and Russia (the government-sponsored pogroms after 1881) brought urgency to the movement to establish a Jewish national home in Palestine. By the mid-1890s, the current prophet, this time dedicated to fulfil the Messianic imperative in his own lifetime, was Theodore Herzl.

From his excursions into the field of international diplomacy in order to turn the attention of world leaders to his cause, Herzl concluded that the support of Britain, the primary power, was vital. By 1898 he had surmised that Britain "was the Archimedean point, where the lever could be applied", and his lieutenants conceded that London should be his "proper sphere of operations" as headquarters for the new Zionism. Thus he unwittingly entered a hornet's nest. For already ensconced as an active organizing body to promote Jewish settlement was the Chovevel Tzion (Lovers of Zion), led by an equally authoritarian Anglo-Jewish army officer, Colonel Goldsmid, who operated as "chief" from London and commanded a network of sub-ordinate "cadet tents" in the provinces. While Herzl posited the more daring approach of utilizing the aid of leading British politicians, Goldsmid, in accord with the Anglo-Jewish Establishment, was against projecting a "Jewish" problem on to the national stage, preferring to move cautiously, by way of self-help, to finance the acquisition of Palestinian land over a long term.

A clash was inevitable. An

attempted compromise at a conference of Anglo-Zionists held at Clerkenwell Town Hall (March 6, 1898) led to the formation of a superficially united English Zionist Federation (EFZ). By 1902, the Herzlites predominated on this as "the dead weight of the already existing organisation" (Theodor Tzion) was abandoned. Herzl got the message. He urged on his supporters - the now, trusting professionals, and the second echelon of the Jewish elite, and the leaders of the poor immigrants of Whitechapel, Leeds and Manchester - "to capture the highest offices that their communities had to offer". By infiltrating, and quickly replacing the old guard, the political arm in the struggle would be strengthened.

But it proved a long and fortuitous process. Unity of aim was frustrated by powerful opportunists, who used the movement to advance their own status and prestige within the community's hierarchy through rival bodies such as the Jewish Territorial Organization, which reacted to the recurring pogroms in Eastern Europe by seeking an alternative refuge for the victims other than Palestine. This organization was dominated by Israel Zangwill, who wasted his energies on such unlikely projects as Jewish settlements in Uganda, Mesopotamia, or even Angola, all, as he himself suspected, to no avail. Opposition to Zionism came from both ends of the class spectrum: on the one hand from diverse radical groups (Anarchists, Anarcho-Socialists, Democrats) who, as internationalists, viewed the objective of a "National Home" as an erroneous diversion from the mainstream of History, which operated through the class, not the national, struggle; on the other hand, from the entrenched senior officers of Anglo-Jewry, such as the Rothschilds and Montefiores, who could rely on Establishment support for their anti-Zionist postures. Some success was registered in the effort to spread Zionism among university students, where conversions included Norman Bentwich at Oxford and Selig Brodetsky at Cambridge, who were to become influential leaders of the world move-

ment. Nevertheless, between the death of its founder Herzl in 1904 and World War One, the EFZ continued to function as an "unstructured mass of independent organisations fractured and factional in temperament".

The policy of entryism into communal politics, urged by the founding father, eventually paid off. It enabled EFZ members to forge alliances of convenience with native interests and individuals who had previously been immune to a more explicitly ideological appeal. But it was a long, hard fight against parochial conservatism to transform Zionism from one more ideology into an inspired programme capable of radically altering the course of Jewish life. Delay was as much due to the ineffectualness of the promoters of

the cause as to the persistence of the opposition. It was, perhaps, the intervention of a man of the highest intellectual stature and political acumen, Chaim Weizmann, that enabled the movement steadily to attract converts from all sections of Anglo-Jewry, until the promise of fulfilment came with the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

Only Weizmann could have overcome the obstacles. He was a master of conciliation, be it between the fractious officers of the community's senior institutions or the self-indulgent rivalries of the gilded Cousinhood. He could assume the populist approach (Yiddish was his mother tongue) with the immigrant masses or sophisticated, rational argument when dealing with a

Rothschild or a government minister. Nevertheless, by 1920, the effort over the whole community to the EFZ was a failure. Such communal progress as did take place during this period was, however, a by-product of its struggle. As Stuart Cohen concludes:

the organisation became one of the links between the recent class arrivals to the British Isles and those whose parents and grandparents had made the journey some time earlier. More to the point, it had participated in the process whereby the community's ruling class came to enlarge its ranks by according the government of native elements, and had hitherto been excluded. In fact, however, the EFZ contributed to the gradual - but nevertheless perceptible - reconstruction of the mores and structure of the community during the first twentieth century.

Cohen has spelt out the intricate with care and precision. There are minor flaws in the text: The year 1889 not 1899 (p.58). The author's tendency to dart swiftly forward and backwards along the time-scale can confuse the lay reader. He might have placed more emphasis on the ethnic immigrant working-class, rather than opposition to Zionism, which constituted the majority of Jews in Britain by the late 1920s, and the power bases in the East End and the provinces of Leeds and Manchester, who argued that together, through the later attachment of the Communist Party, with its anti-Zionist militancy, they constituted prohibitive forces to Zionism until the Nazi Holocaust turned the patterns of support upside down.

These minor criticisms do not detract from what is a genuine work of its time. Through Cohen's perceptive research into the complexities of Jewish life, the growth of British Zionism

A Departure

On this mild island even rocks' Slow tolerance cannot ignore The humped and unassertive shapes Of gunboats anchored off the shore. Now only changing weathers bring New prospects or some second glances; A damaged cliff face altering October's sharp exuberance, The slack commotion of a sea Withdrawing as each fumbled wave Claps out into transparency. Not even sunlight can retrieve. Departing tourists stand in line, The ferry slides to and fro, Its decks awash, a submarine Goes down and all our futures go With what she carries, ordnance, lives, Partitions of recycled air. Our stockpiles and preservatives Submerged and heading God knows where.

John Levett

Ousting the Eurocrats

Oswyn Murray

PETER VANSTANT
Three Six Seven: Memoirs of a Very Important Man
226pp. Peter Owen. £8.95.
0 7206 0602 0

The historical novel can be seen as an escape from history in one of two directions. It may seek to liberate history from the tyranny of evidence, to claim that what can be known is less than the truth which can be imagined; the novel is then an extension of history, an attempt to tell the truth, to make history live. In this direction the historical novel has been one of the most important influences on the writing of history. The figure of Sir Walter Scott dominates romantic historiography, whose achievements are inconceivable without the impetus provided by his novels and his attitude to hallowed poetry. The modern novelist is not in a position to make the impact on history that Scott made; for history is now at least as sophisticated as the novel in its narrative techniques, and has largely abandoned the concept of the hero which is still central to the novel. But we may see writers like Margaret Yourcenar and Mary Renault as broadening the world of history; and biography is at least faced with the serious questions raised by the modern novel for "faction writing". In history, "proper", however, the relationship between the novel and history has shifted to the usurpation by the historian of the novelist's field, in the work of such writers as Ludovic Leitch Cobb, and also to the recognition that the vision of Tolstoy, Dickens or Proust may well be truer than that of any professional historian.

The other direction of escape from history is into the present: the historical novel is often merely the most extreme example of Croce's dictum that all history is contemporary history. The modernization of history is its popularization, the denial of its otherness - or, viewed in a more favourable light, it is a demonstration of the otherness of the present, its resonance in the past.

Peter Vanstant's new novel, *Three Six Seven*, belongs in the second class. An Ancient British businessman lives through the economic collapse of empire in the year which heralded the final withdrawal of the Romans from Britain: for 367 AD was the year of the Great Conspiracy, when the barbarians for the first and only time made a concerted attack on the British pearl. Drusus Antonius Murus looks up from his balance sheets and his tax returns to contemplate the collapse of his world, and draws the conclusion that Britain may yet again be great, standing alone in the world, if only it can find a leader. This is the world of Auden's "Fall of Rome".

Fantastic grow the evening gowns; Agents of the Firm pursue Ascending tax-defaulters through The sewers of provincial towns. Vanstant's prose has much of the frothy quality of Ammianus Marcellinus, from whose brief chapter he draws most of his facts. The barbarians come from outer darkness, Silchester is beleaguered, surrounded by marauding bands of Picts, Scots, Saxons, Fanks and native Britons turned brigand. The local commander, Valentinus sets himself up as a national hero. Drusus Antonius arrives to restore Count Theodosius himself involved in the ambitions of his subordinate Maximus, and unwillingly in Maximus's attempt on the imperial throne: the vision of a prosperous and independent Britain becomes merely the dream of an ageing businessman forgotten because he is unimportant.

It is a vivid allegory of modern Britain struggling for independence from a Europe ruled by a mad bureaucracy, the dream of a world which might yet be if we can find our leader. The parallels are neatly pointed: "Do you know that even in respectable villas, some tutors are refusing to punish, or even correct, simple errors in grammar, citation, phrasing, spelling and so on! They maintain, and are allowed to do so, that they prefer to conform to whatever jargon the populace at large speaks!" Dr. Boyson, I presume; someone certainly ought to punish or even correct the many minor misprints and mistakes that betray a shaky grasp of Roman history in our modern publishers. But the allegory is perhaps too immediate to offer a true insight into our predicament.

A further weakness of the book lies in its central character, the "Very Important Man" whose memoirs it presents. The most sympathetic person in the story, who has the deepest insight into the real meaning of Rome's decline, is Drusus' former mistress Sylvia, now happily married to a minor poet whose lack of merit is carefully delineated. Her verdict on our hero is all too damning: "what a very boring man you are". Towards the end the author himself concedes the point: "An absurd libel was circulated that, at my parties, prime bores were invited for sundown, lesser bores two hours later, and so on until midnight. . . . I myself, it was said, was always the first to arrive." A novel whose chief character would be a rare novel indeed. And how could such a man inform us who need to know of that space outside our world which holds the future?

Altogether elsewhere, vast Herds of reindeer move across Miles and miles of golden moss. Silently and very fast.

Up market in Manhattan

Michael Neve

DAVID ROSNER

A Once Charitable Enterprise: Hospitals and health care in Brooklyn and New York, 1885-1915. 234pp. Cambridge University Press. £20. 0 521 24217 7

The idea of history as a necessary moral lesson, in the high Victorian manner, or the idea of history as, in the end, a history of morality itself, is not a fashionable one. The factoring into that could be said to accompany such kinds of historical argumentation has been found both unappealing to the ear and sadly lacking in methodological sophistication. Instead, the Whigs have been roused, the language of accusation has been dropped; the "past" has given way to "history", that open society where people, both the quick and the dead, speak freely and frankly. Questions of social morality and what they consist in are now left to philosophers, but even they seem chary of explicating moral issues with any certitude. We are assured that morality has a history, and warned to be careful of simplifications like Christianity, or utilitarianism. But the best are said to lack all conviction, while others recommend the bolt-hole of Benedictine-style retreats, to see out the Dark Ages of moral collapse.

In one field of historical endeavour—the history of medicine—this attempted separation of moral and descriptive languages seems particularly hard to manage, and for interesting reasons. A commitment to "neutral" medical history has not merely been difficult, but can often generate nothing less than bad history—history with the anger left out. Given that most human cultures have failed to

produce environments where access to health and happiness are evenly distributed—at least as opportunities—within the social order, the history of medicine could be said to be necessarily entangled with moral judgment, and with a methodology that must see the social/historical dimension not as an option, but as an entirety of a piece with the subject itself. In its great days in the early part of this century, the history of medicine was best practised by a distinguished group of scholars acutely aware of the proximity of medical history to the history of moral and political conduct. This legacy remains, and allows for the possibility that it is medical issues and medical facts that are the actual moral indices of a culture's priorities.

Enterprise is a restrained but firm example of this conjunction. At first glance, he may be praised, in the orthodox manner, for producing a highly professional, excellently researched piece of medical history. For his book is certainly that: full of graphs and tables, with a clearly expressed narrative to accompany them. Rosner has written a study of hospitals and health care in Brooklyn and New York at the turn of the century, and describes how access to health care changed in that time. The hospital system, at the beginning of his period, was based on charity, and on "neighbourhood accessibility". The degree of payment for care by patients was minimal. Under the impact of economic depression in the 1890s, the charity hospitals found themselves under enormous pressures to provide much more than medical aid. Instead, they had to become shelters, providing food. This financial burden was overwhelming, and hospital trustees had to force patients out from the hospitals more rapidly, and deliberately attract fee-paying patients. Hospitals had to aspire to the

condition of hotels. Trustees also had to attract doctors to these newly privatizing places, because they would bring fee-paying patients with them. This proved to be a Trojan horse, since, replicating European battles much earlier in the century, the lay trustees would eventually lose managerial control to the doctors themselves.

The growth in importance of the hospital meant the subsequent withering away, not only of the principle of charity itself, but of smaller health-care institutions that might provide competition; the dispensaries particularly. Institutions such as Brooklyn City Dispensary, founded in the 1880s, had deteriorated into a dental clinic by 1920. Hospital-affiliated dispensaries survived, as "out-patient" clinics, because safely attached to the hospital, the true "mother-ship" of American culture. But independent facilities, accessible to the working class, perished. Nearly 100 dispensaries went out of existence, in New York and Brooklyn, in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In his chapter on the collapse of non-hospital-based medical services, Rosner has chronicled nothing less than the disappearance of the possibility of primary health care in modern New York.

For this is the true worth of this book, that it is a careful contribution to the moral history of Manhattan, and a study of the segregation, based on

race, class and wealth, that makes up so much of that story. Health care is seen, as it has to be, as dependent on stronger powers and struggles, and suffering at their hands: dependent on the struggle for property; on the growth of the suburbs; on the collapse of the charitable instinct in the face of commercial voracity. Rosner's argument is not facile; pockets of effective charity remain in practice in contemporary Manhattan, just as hospitals in the city can provide efficient services for (properly insured) persons. But Rosner has mapped the ending of a non-economically dependent health care system, and a tone of quiet anger at this historical outcome can be detected throughout the book.

One vivid story, from the power-grabbing "Progressive" era, concerns the fate of New York Hospital's Bloomingdale Insane Asylum. Unfortunately, from the point of view of real estate developers, this sat on the hospital's thirty-five acres of land between 110th and 120th Streets, on the expanding upper West Side. Under intense pressure from both political and commercial interests, the hospital governors moved the asylum out of sight, to White Plains, Westchester. Naturally, an exclusive interest was protected thereby, and Morningside Heights could become a WASP wedge, between Harlem (then Italian/Jewish) and other parts of the West Side, mostly Irish Catholic.

Rosner describes the way that the light touch that remains as a historical reader also of the instrument of social distancing: the telephone. That system of medical aid based on the passing of a word is part of the story of American medicine itself; that it was cheap came closest to an ethical model, and one that did not last long. Here would be unfair, even though the model he has used can seem a little neat to portray the sad journey from nice old *gemeinshaft* to nasty new *gesellschaft*. Without preaching, without being obscure, Rosner has written his contribution to the history of how Manhattan became both a city of immigrants, with, in medical terms, the inevitable effects on an ordinary people: "Just as New York was emerging as a working class city, its charity and health institutions began to turn away from the poor to remodel their services around the needs of wealthier clients." In medical history is revealed as the history. But given that Rosner himself teaches and lives in New York, one only hopes that the social responsibility that he implicitly calls for finds a response in the older, fairer ideal of a city that he has brought to life in his pages.

Stopping it hurting

J. F. Watkins

H. B. GIBSON

Pain and Its Conquest. 224pp. Peter Owen. £10.95. 0 7206 0595 4

RONALD MELZACK and PATRICK D. WALL

The Challenge of Pain. 447pp. Penguin. £4.95. 0 14 08 0456 8

Pain and Its Conquest is a summary in about 200 pages of everything that is known about pain. The book will appeal not only to those professionally concerned with the management of pain, but also to those philosophers and priests who may need to grapple with the problem of pain. For example, H. B. Gibson quotes the barbarous opinion of C. S. Lewis that pain, even of a child, is a punishment for the sin of "choosing self for the centre", rather than God. True to his vocation as a detached psychologist, Gibson does not rage against this attitude, but suggests, with irony mild to the point of impenetrability, that the views of Camus on the matter, as expressed in *The Plague*, are "somewhat more humane".

Lewis's opinion has, of course, been a commonplace of Christian doctrine from the beginning, as Gibson points out in his excellent chapters on the historical background and the nature of pain. Paracelsus, it seems, early in the sixteenth century, had discovered ether and even suggested its use in the relief of pain, as an anaesthetic. Burning at the stake would have been his reward for the impety of going beyond suggestion, to judge from the fact, in 1591, of the Edinburgh midwife Agnes Simpson, who tried simple herbal analgesics. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of pain has been the resistance of Christianity (partly under the influence of Galen) to any serious attempt to alleviate it. How is it that a religion professing love for humanity should have been so assiduous and artful in devising ways of hurting people? The subject deserves a book to itself.

Women's pains in menstruation and childbirth were until recently another arena where cruelty and bigotry contended with reason. In a valuable chapter on this problem, Gibson notes that female dyspareunia, or painful intercourse, is discussed in the medical literature far more frequently than dysmenorrhoea. Can there be another index of male insensitivity to women's

problems? The opinion that dysmenorrhoea is a sign of a neurotic personality survives today only in the minds of a few elderly practitioners of medicine and perhaps some younger ones whose brains have been affected by over-indulgence in rugby football. The general opinion is that the condition is a physiological disturbance which will eventually yield to treatment.

The pains of childbirth, since Queen Victoria's heroic gesture, are no longer regarded as a punishment to be patiently endured, but they still present a problem. Are these pains "natural" or not? Gibson states that between seven and fourteen per cent of women experience no pain at all at parturition. Is there a psychological component in the pains of childbirth? The claims of enthusiasts for relaxation methods, such as Read's, or the Russian technique of psychoprophylaxis, with its roots in hypnosis and Pavlovian conditioning, suggest that there is. Gibson discusses, with some enthusiasm, an extraordinary approach to pain in general, and obstetric pain in particular, which he calls the "Epicurean" approach. The idea is to "oppose pain with positive feelings of pleasure", by, for example, using hypnotic suggestion to convert the pain of childbirth into a "sexual experience culminating in orgasm", or distracting the sufferer's attention from other forms of pain by swamping him with pleasant sensations. He quotes Robert Burton's observation that some physicians would supply a "beautiful young wench" and a "portion or two of good drink" as a remedy against pain. It's certainly worth a try, but one may wonder whether psychological methods of pain relief have come very far since the seventeenth century.

It is true, as Gibson writes on the penultimate page, that through intensive mental or physical activity we can "come to terms with pain", but coming to terms with is not conquest. The main unconquered areas are in some forms of chronic pain, to which a chapter is devoted. Pain in the "phantom limb" of some amputees, or the inability to localize a severe chronic pain in patients who have undergone removal of part of their cerebral cortex, suggest that the correct answer to the question "Where's the pain?" is "In my mind". Here we enter the mysterious region of pain considered as a mode of perception, where there are no satisfactory answers to all sorts of questions like, "Would a hallucination of pain be a 'real' pain?"

Pain is a psychological problem as

much as a neuro-physiological one, and Gibson gives an excellent account of the contortions psychologists have suffered in considering the problem. Wyke, for example, has called pain "an abnormal emotional state". Freudians declare that some pains "need" their pain. The "cultural therapist" Thomas Szasz appears to believe that patients with chronic pain have chosen to become *doloureux* because their careers failed them.

The idea of pain as a state of consciousness rather than a sharp perception requiring pain receptors, pain nerves, and pain areas in the brain is part of the revolution in modern scientific thinking about pain of which another aspect is the "Gate Control Theory" of Patrick Wall and Ronald Melzack, whose 1973 book *The Pain of Pain* has been revised and published as *The Challenge of Pain*. This covers much the same ground as Gibson's book but will be incomprehensible to the non-specialist because of its less mellifluous style and its liberal use of technical language. It is chiefly notable, however, for its account of the sensory theory and its development.

In essence, the Gate Control theory states that before a stimulus is perceived as pain it must pass through control mechanisms, or gates, in the central nervous system. If the gates are opened or closed by any one of a number of impulses, some of which may come from the cerebral cortex, the body is so obviously sensible and right that it is difficult to understand the reluctance with which some authorities have attacked it. It provides some explanations for much that is paradoxical and paradoxical in the perception of pain. Even acupuncture, if it works at all, can be provided with a reasonable explanation.

Last Aid: The Medical Dictionary Nuclear War, consisting of 100 papers delivered to the First Congress of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Washington DC in March 1980, has now been published (338pp. Corgi W. H. Freeman. £15.80 paperback. 0 7167 1434 5). It is edited by Eric Chivian, Robert Jay Lifton and E. Mack, point out in their preface that "nuclear war would result in death, injury, and disease on a scale of natural catastrophe, or worse, in all history." Papers deal with the environmental and medical consequences and the response to a possible nuclear conflict.

The conservative contribution

D. J. Enright

ROBERT NISBET

Prejudices: A Philosophical Dictionary. 318pp. Harvard University Press. £12.25. 0 674 70065 1

Once upon a time a book of this nature would have carried some elegant title such as *Conduct of Life*, or *Culture and Anarchy*, or *On Present Discontents*. Anarch, in words taken from a highly respected foreign tongue, *De Corpore Politico*, or *Sturm ohne Drang*. But these days books need either to deal with hobbies (including sex), or else to be or seem to be improving (on sex, for instance). The word "Prejudices" may suggest a hobby (Build your own... How to enjoy...), while "Dictionary" suggests a hobby (improving air about it, possibly enhanced by the ambiguous adjective "Philosophical").

In the event Robert Nisbet's book is a collection of solid mini-essays on (to put it mildly) vexed questions arranged in alphabetical order. The author is not writing "prejudices": he has preferences and abhorrences, he considers some conditions better or worse than others, and he gives his reasons. It is only when disagreeing with him that one is tempted to fall back on that piece of misbehaving—or, more justly, when one comes up against an occasional lapse in imagination or a blind spot contingent on strong, clear views. *Prejudices* is enormously well read and exceptionally well written, as well as unusually handsome to the eye. So much so that a false accent on a French word comes as a distinct shock.

It is perhaps a pity that the alphabet begins with "Abortion", a question so truly vexed as (I suspect) to defy decent generalization. "The surest sign of despotism in history is the state's suppression of the family's authority over its own." It may be the principle implied in this declaration—the most potent principle of the book—that leads him to espouse the abortionist party as against the anti-abortionist. Abortion can hardly be acclaimed *en masse* because (for their own purposes) Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Russia both Tsarist and Stalinist were opposed to the practice. Moreover, Nisbet appeals too easily to "family authority" as if it were self-evidently bound to be noble and benign. (Surely had parents antedated the welfare services.) In his habitual fairness he invokes the "repugnant spectacle" of militant abortionists marching happily with "lesbians, homosexuals, and others whose interest in freedom is matched by a desire to vent punitive fury upon the family"; but he considers aggressive anti-abortionists the greater evil in that they strike at the very heart of individual as well as family rights.

No doubt one will be spewed out of every rational person's mouth for being neither hot nor cold, but "It all depends", one wants to murmur, and "Well, I would save the mother's life at the cost of the child's, but...". Abortion is at best a sorry thing, something which is sometimes necessary or advisable, but can be neither welcomed with open arms nor rejected out of hand. Nisbet's solicitude for family authority (whose family? One would like some minute particulars here) has induced him to take up an either/or stance. With due respect to clear thinking, there is a small emotional consideration which, though it may not sway us, must at least discomfit: anti-abortionists, whatever their reasoning, let live. We would not like to see the opposing principle achieve general acceptance.

It is the uses of the word "Anomie" that have alienated us from it. The same can be said of "Anomie", now a fancy name for doing one's own thing, out of boredom (or, ignorance of) the way others have done things. The culture of narcissism (breeding) has been nicely observed by Christopher Lasch: individualism as a mass movement, lone wolves moving in huge packs. Yet, Nisbet points out, under certain circumstances anomie can be "tonic rather than toxic": for one thing, "All creative work has implicit a measure of anomie, for the absence of creativity is that the creator

move far enough away from one orthodoxy or conventionalism... to have the feeling 'I am I' strongly than he would were he still closely bound to *nomos*, to the body of the law, custom and convention. (Exceptions may prove the rule, but they also get in its way!) For that phenomenon we need another word than "anomie". If we found one it too would prove to have been besmirched by its usages; there's no such thing these days as a virgin word, or if there is, it must be quite egregiously unappealing.

Like Goethe's Mephistopheles who "tempts, excites and must, as Devil, create", "Atheism" can be a stimulant. More dangerous to religion is indifference—and the jaded (or else zealously ingratiating) erosion going on in the "mainstream churches", whose current interests appear to be political or sociological rather than theological. "A religion that is not spiritually exacting and directed at the communicant's faith in God and sense of grace is not at bottom a religion at all." There is (or can be) a community of belief in atheism, as more obviously in Marxism and Freudianism, which makes these something like religions; there is no sense of community, of shared endeavour, in indifference.

Good men, like this Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities (Emeritus), bring out the devil's advocate in less good men. (By the by, as an instance of "Covetousness" Nisbet cites a political scientist who was simultaneously Allison W. Scott Distinguished Service Research Professor and Director of the Miriam Angstrom Butler Institute for Political Analysis at one university and Elmer Crittenden Distinguished Professor and Director of the Mark J. Smith Center for the Study of Political Dynamics at another.) Hence I would wish to insinuate that indifference (and not merely in the matter of abortion) does have its negative virtues. It may not strive officiously or otherwise to keep alive, but neither does it kill; that is why we need whipping up by propaganda, flags and trumpets....

Under "Authoritarianism" fiction has often soared, "for one way to beat the government is by disguising a message in the plot and action of a novel, play, or short story". Writers had to take trouble (artistic trouble) to disguise their message; also, they authoritarily had a message. No authoritarianism, no message, no disguise—little art. Instead it all hangs out, and what hangs out is never of much interest. (See under "Boredom", one cause of which is security from predators.) But for censorship Milton would not have set down the ringing words of *Areopagitica*. In an efficiently totalitarian state, however, Milton wouldn't have lived to write *Paradise Lost*. Nisbet distinguishes between the two kinds thus: "Whereas in authoritarian society everything is permitted that is not explicitly forbidden, nothing is permitted in totalitarian society that is not explicitly authorized." I think there is a capacious borderland which takes in the sort of régime, whether you call it authoritarian or totalitarian, which cajoles, bullies and laughs writers into conformity or silence. Such countries are often materially prosperous (and hence in no need of messages), and admired for their orderliness by those more liberal countries forced to pay the price of liberalism.

That kind of settled authoritarianism doesn't slide into totalitarianism because nobody is pushing it in any direction. An outstanding case of successful stasis is the Republic of Singapore; permanence can be ensured simply by cloning the prime minister. Totalitarianism, according to Nisbet, derives from the revolutionary destruction of authoritarianism. This grim thought is happily softened by his persuasion that "in the long run... authoritarian states are more stable than totalitarian ones because the latter have to keep on remaking human personality, reimposing homogeneity, generation after generation. It looks like another either/or, and no third alternative.

Fleeing from the A's, we find ourselves at "War". Which is hell, but... Most men lead lives of quiet desperation, and (according to Nisbet) many of them, desiring release from

the stupefying pressure of the mundane, would prefer noisy desperation. Nisbet himself, though "well-favoured" (i.e., not notably bored, not workless, or poor, or put-upon), found in the Second World War a sense of fulfillment not available in the groves of academe. War can also satisfy the "need for community". (His blue-eyed pets are fast becoming my *blues noires*.) Nisbet sounds more and more like Rupert Brooke in his 1914 sonnets, that classical account of noble war versus ignoble peace: "Now for the first time in their lives" men and women in huge numbers "were separated from the economic exploitations, from egoistic calculations, from competition so often unrelieved by love and friendship, and from the long literalness of civil society". War is good for progress, a great "nourisher of science and invention"; without it we should never have developed anaesthetics and antibiotics, nor invented the sewing-machine (thought up in France to produce uniforms at speed), nor the atomic bomb. (It has often been observed that war gave a great boost to prosthetics.) Also, war brings prosperity, "both during and afterwards": it solved the Great Depression of the 1930s. Furthermore democracy itself is "the child of war", born along with the "socially levelled" infantry. In "Militarism", which sees martial law as the only answer to pervasive social nihilism and can only hope that somewhere or other martial law will be palliated by "the memory of a democracy that worked", Nisbet quotes Napoleon's remark that "a marshal's labors lay in the knapsack of every soldier. Not every soldier managed to get his fingers round it, though.

What do we have nowadays? Not exactly Pacifism, which with some reason Nisbet sees as bearing much the same relationship to war as atheism bears to religion. No, merely passivity, a sense of futility, and the ever more substantial spectre of nuclear war (we can't afford a really big war; but those who died in "conventional" war could afford that either, it cost them everything they had), and terrorism and "a devil's potpourri of ethnic, racial, mini-state, border, and guerrilla wars". Brooke wouldn't have thought much of such a prospect; it might even have reconciled him to the long literalness of civil society as well as "all the little emptiness of love".

But perhaps Nisbet is being witty about war? (In "Conservatism", possibly the saddest essay here, he opines that war can only enhance "the nation *en indivisible*" at the expense of those Burkean "smaller patriotisms" and "subordinate loyalties" which he prizes as the molecular constituents of the social order.) He shows how risky Wit can be in the following and final entry. Somebody has described it as the only weapon with which one can stab oneself in the back; brevity may be so, but gravity is more soulful and enables you to rise higher in the world. In fact, as any dictionary of quotations will indicate, on no subject have wits been more hitting than on wit. If Menckes hadn't been known as a humorist, Nisbet claims, he would have been recognized as a great critic. And Adlai Stevenson is the candidate *par excellence* in the list of politicians who sank by their levity, while the relatively dour Eisenhower "kept looking more and more responsible to the American people". I first read this as "for the American people" that would have been impossibly witty.

Nisbet is especially entertaining on "Reification", a process he defines as "the stealing of life from the individual and the concrete in order to secure it in some ontological intervertebrate"; which is not quite what the language of Goethe all began when it is meant to mean. I gave away to that of Hegel—green grew all theory, at the cost of turning the golden tree of life grey—and then that of Marx. "It is one thing to mutiny against Captain Bligh, but for an honest-to-god revolution, a blob-like capitalism is necessary." We are told that in the nineteenth century the French, once so sharp and precise in their language, had acquired as many words ending in *-isme* as the Germans had *-ismus*. But it is, I think, that is "without question the sign of the reifying classes", for, varying the

metaphor, in the social sciences and humanities structures multiply both sexually and asexually. Risking wit, Nisbet declares that "structuralism is in fact the modern Slough of Despond"; well, it is so tiring to treat either people or poems as separate individuals, and we do have other things to do with our time.... (What?) The subject makes Nisbet so mad that even community gets slated—or rather, for the real offender is the spirit of egalitarianism, the "paste of abstraction known affectionately to all centralizers and egalitarians as 'community'"; that is, national exploitation, "Incidentally, isn't war the most assiduous reifier? It turns people into things, often into paste-like abstractions.

Conservatism is embattled and wherever it looks it finds cause for dismay and exasperation, the more so when it looks with the eyes of an intellectual born before the death of Latin and Greek, even before the death of God, as intimate with the past as anyone can be without having lived in it, alienated (pardon!) from much of the present, and distressed for a future which may hold no memory of his dearest warnings. Nisbet's satire is of a scholarly cast, but he remains humorous as well as apposite, for example in remarking under "Humanities" (another good word gone to the dogs) that "there is, as a suffering world knows, good writing, bad writing, and creative writing"; in proposing that what "Psychobiology" teaches us is that the Protestant Reformation was the outcome of "a young man's identity crisis in the sixteenth century"; and in relating the story, apropos of "Psychobabble", of the young woman who majored with honours in eco-feminism and set off for Washington, DC, confident that a good job awaited her in that centre of ecological and feminist lobbies—only to discover that even those lobbies required in their employees the ability to "read, write, count, and in general ratiocinate". And similarly when, in "Victimology", he envisages a state of affairs in which, by the year 2000, the whole of American society will consist of accredited victims—victims of

unemployment, drink, broken homes, male chauvinism, white supremacy, public schools, cuts in the budget for the Arts... in short, of "society".

But it seems sad that elsewhere liberals, even "contemporary liberals", get defined as people who "sympathize with the mugger and the rapist in contrast to the victim". If it is to make headway (something he has little faith in), Nisbet's conservatism will need a generous admixture of honourable liberalism. Most of all, it is the element of inconsistency or second thoughts in him which reassures us that judgment hasn't hardened into prejudice. Under its own heading he approves heartily of Technology—and to hell with the massed ranks of Ludite poets and painters—in that it liberates man from degradation and soul-shattering drudgery. (Instead of blaming the automobile and the pill for their disruptive effects, we are advised to indict "the state and its bureaucratic invasions of, and thus in time its spoils of, the fabric of family authority".) In "Ritual", however, he notes that only two things can save men from ennui—religion and fulfilling work, and "alas, *homo faber* has been replaced all too often by automated technology, with consequent diminution in the worker's self-importance"; while under "Family" he admits that, harnessed to statism, technology has helped to bring about an unprecedented degree of power and control over the individual. Conversely, liberalism—whose resolution is always prone to be sickled over by the pale cast of conscience—will need a strong infusion of active conservatism if it is to hold out against urban decay, casual atrocities, street violence, proliferating bureaucracy and the slow evaporation of individual responsibility.

To endure the toothache is hard enough. How anyone can think seriously these days—unprotected by ignorance, and assuming that feeling attends thinking—and not read Nisbet is beyond understanding. It must be his blend of *gravitas* and *levitas*, along with the relative brevitas of his books, that enables Robert Nisbet to preserve every appearance of sanity.

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Systematic savagery

James Joll

WOLFGANG J. MOMMSEN and
GERHARD HIRSCHFELD (Editors)
Social Protest, Violence and Terror in
Nineteenth and Twentieth Century
Europe
411pp. Macmillan. £20.
0 333 32002 6

One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter; and at least two former members of the Nobel organizations are holders of the Nobel Peace Prize. Words such as social protest, violence and terror are so loosely used that it is valuable to have a series of historical case-studies dealing with movements which had very different aims but which had in common the use of violence to achieve them. This volume is the result of a conference organized by the German Historical Institute in London, and the twenty-two papers by German, Austrian, British and American historians are almost all of great interest and of a high scholarly standard. The book provides concrete examples to remind us that terrorism is not a new phenomenon peculiar to the second half of the twentieth century, as well as suggesting more precise ways of constructing a typology of terrorism and what the editors call "non-legal" violence than most of the many other books on the subject.

Historically these essays include a wide range of differing movements: outbreaks of violent protest in England and Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Russian social revolutionaries, anarchists and separatists in Spain, syndicalists in France, the *squadristi* and storm

troopers of Fascism and National Socialism. They are introduced by an interesting discussion by Franklin Ford of what he calls the place of purposeful homicide in political history. Both he and Eric Hobsbawm in his comments on Ford's paper stress the new factors which make late twentieth-century terrorism different from that of earlier periods: for Ford these are principally the new technical possibilities available to the assassin in our own time, the publicity he can hope to obtain, but also the eclecticism of the ideologies which inspire him, "religious, pseudo-religious, libertarian, nihilistic, anti-colonial, Marxist... and at times... simply purgative for the individual doing the deed". Hobsbawm suggests that any analysis of political violence needs to be wider in scope so as to account for the transition from the socially acceptable violence of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England (Hobsbawm has elsewhere written of "collective bargaining by riot") and the characteristic twentieth-century phenomenon in which "the innocent... are the real and often intended victims." This was in fact the case in some earlier movements: the violent French anarchists of the late nineteenth century maintained, as an excuse for bombing a crowded café, that "it is a case of innocence" so that anyone who tolerated the existing state of society was a legitimate victim. The act of violence was more important than the consequences it was supposed to be bringing about, even though in practice, as Ulrich Linse points out in an interesting discussion of the difference between "propaganda by deed" and "direct action", the consequences of political assassinations were far more devastating for the anarchists themselves than for the

society against which they had been directed. In a concluding essay Wolfgang Mommesen distinguishes between terrorist movements in several ways, but firstly in terms of their ideological presuppositions: some (and many movements of the early industrial age belong to this category) look backwards to a lost time when the "good old laws" prevailed and traditional rights were respected: others look to the future and to a new utopian world to be called into being by the destruction of the old order. This is a useful classification for many spontaneous acts of protest, such as the movements described by Malcolm Thomis in his essay on the aims and ideology of violent protest in Great Britain, 1880-48, or in Hans-Gerhard Husung's account of collective violent protest during the German *Vormärz*, but as Mommesen realizes, we need a more complicated model if we are also to include nationalist movements or Fascist movements for which, as Adrian Lyttelton says in his excellent discussion of Fascism and violence in post-war Italy, "violence was so inherent to the practice of the movement and so prominent in its ideology, that it cannot be treated as one aspect among others in the history of Fascism."

Two points emerge which are common to nearly all the movements discussed in this volume. Terrorism reminds the public, often in a most dramatic form, of the existence of the movements which practise it. "To attract the attention of the entire world, that is not itself a victory?" Plekhanov asked after the murder of the Tsar Alexander II in 1881, as Astrid von Borcke tells us in her study of the *Narodnaya Volya*. This often

gives the impression that a movement is much stronger than it in fact is, but it also demoralizes governments ("the present government must not be allowed a quiet moment", the Austrian Nazis, described by Gerhard Botz, asserted in 1932) and forces them to take oppressive action which, terrorists often hope, will itself make liberal public opinion more sympathetic to their cause — an element in, for example, the strategy of the Basque ETA analysed by Gerhard Brunn. A tradition of terrorism keeps a cause alive both in the minds of its supporters and its opponents. Michael Laffan, in a lucid, balanced and perceptive account of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and its successor the IRA, shows how the Provisionals today are "unworthy heirs to an unbroken tradition going back to the mid-nineteenth century", and "however much ordinary Irishmen might disapprove of their actions, the mere fact that the Provisionals represent, however misguidedly, the present generation in the age-old fight against the British enemy has won them a certain sympathy."

This suggests that a distinction can be made between those movements which have a recognizable goal of national independence, the withdrawal of power from the state — and those which remain marginal with no clearly defined aim outside their own acts of terrorism and the preservation of their own small groups. These groups have nothing to offer except ever more savage violence for its own sake and achieve little except to provide a tiny minority with, as Mommesen remarks, their own quasi-religious behaviour, patterns and an internal structure and ethical code often resembling that of extreme religious sects. Professor Mommesen and Dr Hirschfeld, by assembling scholars from different countries and from different generations, have provided an interesting and informative historical discussion of many forms of violent protest, but they have also reminded us of the difficulty and indeed danger of equating groups which have little in common with each other except their methods.

The frighteners

R. L. Clutterbuck

GRANT WARDLAW

Political Terrorism: Theory, tactics, and counter-measures.
218pp. Cambridge University Press.
£16.50 (paperback), £5.95.
0 521 25032 3

This is an outstanding book, a worthy successor to Paul Wilkinson's *Terrorism and the Liberal State*, containing a concise, comprehensive, sensible and liberal analysis of its subject. Its author, Grant Wardlaw, is a psychologist by training and a criminologist by profession, and he brings a refreshingly direct and jargon-free style of writing to a subject on which too much nonsense has been written in the past.

The first third of the book is about terrorism itself, the second two thirds about the response to it. Dr Wardlaw starts by giving a definition of terrorism and makes rather heavy weather of it. Can one really improve on the ancient Chinese proverb, "Kill one, frighten ten thousand"? He then traces the development of terrorism, by way of its changing purposes and strategies, to its modern forms and effects. He finds room for some intriguing sidelights — for example that in 1975 German terrorists obtained and threatened to release fifty-four litres of mustard gas in several cities; also the claim (quoting Walter Laqueur) that nineteenth-century terrorists, whether Russian, French or Irish, would not have stooped, like their twentieth-century successors, to abducting children. (He may be right, but medieval terrorists did so, and I would guess that from the dawn of civilization the tribal or village dissident quickly discovered that the toughest of children would be more vulnerable to the abduction of his daughter or of his son and heir than to a threat to his own life.)

In the main part of the book — on the response to terrorism — Wardlaw gives some excellent advice concerning the media, by assessing the damage they can do, wittingly or unwittingly, in putting innocent lives at risk. In tackling this problem there are grave dangers of hobbling one of the most vital safeguards of a liberal society — free investigative journalism — and the cure should lie in the profession enforcing its own ethical standards as doctors and the lawyers do. But, in an era of cut-throat competition, will journalists ever do it? Until they do, the danger will remain from what Wardlaw describes as "a symbiotic relationship." Terrorists and journalists are both in the business of attracting an audience so, albeit often reluctantly, the second may aid and abet the first.

Wardlaw has a useful chapter on the army, and the police, Australia and New Zealand (he is a New Zealander working in Australia) both follow the British way in crisis management, in

the training of police anti-terrorist squads and of their own SAS rescue squads, and in their procedure in reaching the crucial decision to abandon negotiations and launch these highly professional soldiers. The moment must surely be when it becomes clear that the terrorists are going to kill a hostage unless they are killed first or, to put it another way, when the time has come for weapons to be used offensively to save innocent lives.

The most valuable chapter of all is *Political Terrorism* is on the legal regulation of terrorism. Nowhere have I read an analysis as good as Wardlaw's of the minefield of international conventions, conferences, etc. which have attempted (or, in the case of many UN members, pretended to attempt) to secure international cooperation against terrorism. No solution is remotely likely so long as new governments continue to regard killing innocent people in order to terrorize others as an excusable provided that the motive is a political one. Even if it were accepted that political motives did not justify terrorism, and if all countries undertook to "extradite or prosecute" anyone who committed it, sadly, few judiciaries are wholly resistant to governmental pressure. Nevertheless, these international conferences have not been entirely without value and have at least provided opportunities for sensible bilateral arrangements to be made in the lobbies in the intervals between the public sessions of hypocritical speech-making.

The author's touch is less sure in domestic legislation. He talks of Germany and Great Britain as examples but his analysis here is rather naive. It is also a pity that he does not examine the Italian terrorist package of 1979, which was in response to a horrific spate of criminal and political murder and abduction, and was consequently more draconian than the legislation in Britain and Germany. In all three countries the existing measures seem to be working and very little new evidence has been produced, in the book or elsewhere, to prove that the powers have been abused to the prejudice of the liberty of innocent citizens. My guess is that there will be very few such cases indeed; certainly not enough to challenge the justification of measures which have undoubtedly saved many lives.

Dr Wardlaw's chapter on intelligence is well laid out and reveals no secrets. It includes an interesting analysis of terrorist tactics and techniques, and a useful checklist of indicators for predicting (not technology terrorist attacks (nuclear, etc.) which for good reason is considered unlikely. On the handling of hostage situations he bases his analysis on good case studies, drawn from the experience of the American, British and the Dutch. He also includes a sensitive chapter commenting on findings of behavioural scientists that law-enforcement professionals may be sceptical about them.

Hospitable intentions

Terence Cave

THOMAS M. GREENE

The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry.
354pp. Yale University Press. £14.
0 300 02765 6

"Nebbia o polvere al vento, fuggo per non esser pellegrino": with some adjustment of context, Petrarch's image of flight, exile, and the desire for a new homeland could be read as an emblem of the pathos that besets the Renaissance activity of "imitation". The point will be made more explicitly by humanists such as Poliziano and Erasmus, who claim that the best way to imitate an ancient writer is to write for oneself and one's own times. Troy is buried; the past is lost; there is no turning back.

The Light in Troy is a probing study of such tensions and paradoxes in both the imitation theory and the poetry of Renaissance Italy, France and England. Not the least of its merits is that it provides a conspectus of theories of imitation from ancient times to the sixteenth century: astonishingly, no one has so far attempted such a synthesis, although the topic is essential to the understanding of Renaissance literature and, as Thomas M. Greene points out, raises problems which underlie any diachronic study of literary texts. Those who are looking for a bread-and-butter guide to the discussion of imitative practice in which is here embedded, and may be frustrated at times by changes of pace which give prominence to certain writers and periods and only allow a fleeting glance at others. They may

also feel that the express decision to avoid distinctions between imitation, paraphrase and translation (one might add commentary and compilation to the list) begs a number of important questions: imitation is in many cases constituted as a method of writing by its place in this range of options. But this would be to ask for another book. The economy of *The Light in Troy* requires that the historical and theoretical thread be woven into a detailed analysis of individual poets (Petrarch, Poliziano, Ronsard, Du Bellay, Wyatt, Jonson) and individual poems. Greene's method of alternation between, and interpenetration of, the two levels is one with which I have a great deal of sympathy: he was right, surely, in his attempt to synthesize different kinds of approach to risk the occasional structural cracks.

Four types of imitation are distinguished in an introductory chapter: the reproductive or sacramental, where a consecrated text is repeated without modification within the host-text as an act of homage; the eclectic or exploitative, which consists of a miscellany of allusions, echoes and quotations and is identifiable with the Renaissance principle of *contaminatio*; the heuristic, where the allusion is advertised in such a way as to draw attention to the gulf separating the subtext from its host; thus provoking an insight into historical distance; the dialectical, where the host exposes the vulnerability of its subtext while at the same time exposing itself to the subtext's potential aggression. It will be obvious that this taxonomy is designed to bring out the relative degree of tension or distance between the borrowed material and its new context: the last category, in which, as

Greene puts it, "The text is the locus of a struggle between two rhetorical or semiotic systems that are vulnerable to one another and whose conflict cannot easily be resolved", is the model for all the others.

It is also a model for Greene's method as a whole. Stressing the increasingly acute sense of anachronism which is a constitutive aspect of Renaissance humanism, he draws attention to the agonistic dialogue with the past which is implicit in the imitative poetry of the period. The predicament of the humanist is that he is faced with a corpus of mismatched writings, alien yet immensely powerful, accessible to newly-formed techniques of linguistic and philological enquiry yet tantalizingly obscure or corrupt. He works in the shadow of this heritage, sometimes filled with a sense of irremediable inferiority, sometimes asserting his own ability to exploit, to emulate, and even to go beyond its achievement. Greene draws felicitously at key points on his imaginative leitmotif, "the light in Troy", as an emblem of both loss and illumination, as when he remarks that the growth of historicism freed Petrarch with "a daunting literary life" by the dim brilliance of a vanishing city.

This is the core of the book's novelty, both in theme and in method. When Greene claims on the very first page that "we are not skilled in discussing imitative works as imitations", one might well be puzzled: for French literature, at least, one could cite the sensitive commentaries of Henri Weber, Dorothy Coleman, Mary McKinley and others. But Greene's approach is the first to deal systematically with the conflicts, the

dialectic of imitative texts, rather than making the assumption of a creative synthesis between imitator and model. His coinage "subreading" engenders a new perspective: the reading he aims at is one which is aware of the archaeology of a text and of the accommodations — often aggressive ones — between its different strata. Hence, in turn, another dominant metaphor of the book: the writing of a humanist text is an act of necromancy, calling forth from entombment the shadows of a remote past and endowing them with a new and changed life. Poliziano's obsession with physical and textual dismemberment and, still more, Du Bellay's sonnets on the ruins of Rome provide paradigms of these themes and their textual embodiment.

There are many powerful moments in Greene's study of individual poets: he brings out, for example, the relative lack of tension in Ronsard's exploitation of subtexts, his preference for a kind of free-wheeling *vagabondage*; he stresses the ways in which Du Bellay and Wyatt achieve some degree of detachment in their perception of temporal or semiological mutability; and he appreciates the concern with "the exercise of bridging a rupture and playing with the differences between the separated worlds".

But, inevitably, the three chapters on Petrarch form the centrepiece of the book and the test-case for Greene's approach. His view is one of deep fascination and attraction but also a kind of repulsion. He sees Petrarch's sensibility as torn between the synchronic security of the medieval imagination (represented by his interlinear glosses on Virgil's first eclogue) and that fearsome vision of the road that leads away from Troy. The vernacular poetry, according to this analysis, enacts a conflict between the serenity of its classical subtexts and its own "lapsarian insecurity", a fall from Virgilian poise into unrescued oxymoron. In a sense, Greene is simply restating here the well-known interplay of classical and Augustinian elements in Petrarch's imagination, but he restates it in a form that bears directly on the rhetoric and structure of the poems. Although at times the subreadings may seem actually to invent the intertextual drama rather than merely to analyse it, one cannot fail to be impressed by the virtuosity of discussion of Petrarch's play on the connotations of the word *amor*, or by the analysis of *Rime* 188 as an implied meditation on "the loss of ancient plenitude".

The central problem of these chapters arises not from an occasional soliciting of the text (no literary critic can escape that accusation) but from the notion of an "ontology of selfhood" which Greene takes to

be the key issue in Petrarch's confrontation with alien models. It is undeniable that certain humanist and post-humanist — Petrarch, Erasmus and Montaigne are the most striking examples — begin to derive from their sense of the otherness of classical writings a corresponding sense of their own identity. But to render Petrarch's "quidam suum ac proprium" by phrases such as "innermost being" or "the essential core of selfhood" is dangerously anachronistic, especially as Greene seems at times to lapse into the highly questionable assumption that this essential Petrarchan self precedes the dialogue with ancient texts, rather than being its product.

The uncertainty is crucial, since it really matters whether we are talking here about the gradual formation of one of the most powerful myths of modern sensibility or about the quality of an author's supposed state of mind. In the end, I think it is the latter — what one might call the pathology of imitation — that interests Greene. From this side of the Atlantic, it looks very much as if he is himself grappling with the anxiety of Harold Bloom's influence, seeking to displace it by using phrases like "the anxiety of originality" or by emphasizing the overcoming of anxiety. Positive values mean a great deal to him. The phrase "moral style" is a recurrent one, and there is an assumption (denied in the occasional disclaimer) that the acquisition of a historical sense is an emergence into sanity and balance: the good poems are the ones that display awareness of the conflict between surface text and subtext (what a pity that Ronsard "failed to understand the problematic character of creative imitation"). It is not altogether a surprise to find that Greene's view of Jonson is supported by two quotations from Leavis.

The Light in Troy draws, in fact, on many critical approaches, from an Empsonian awareness of the way words can reverberate to deconstruction in the style of Paul de Man: "complex imitation", as Greene conceives it, is like a kind of rhetorical deconstruction. One of the great strengths of the book, making it (almost) impregnable against attack from a restrictively positivistic angle, is its critical self-awareness. Greene admits that he is as much a prisoner of anachronism as his poets and humanists; that our etiological myths of the Renaissance are pieced together from fragments of humanist etiologicals and that we ourselves are thus engaged in a kind of necromancy, where the ghosts come out of their graves in noticeably modern gear. Precisely because it is so successful in articulating the problems of humanist *imitatio*, this study illustrates with especial force the inevitability of anachronism in literary history and criticism.

Command behaviour

Geoffrey Best

WILLIAM H. MCNEILL

The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000
405pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £15.
0 631 13134 5

The pioneer steam-engine manufacturer's boast to the visiting monarch that he sold what all men desired — power — comes immediately to mind reading William H. McNeill's book, for the grand theme is, the mastering role in history of armed force in mutually fruitful relations with technological, commercial and industrial development.

The idea in its simple self, of course, is not new, but the breadth and gusto with which Professor McNeill has elaborated and presented it is quite breathtaking. Anyone who has read him before knows that he is accustomed to think big. A man who is accustomed to think big, the history of the human race has written "the Rise of the West" and not only got away with it but won acclaim and prizes is out of the class of most of us monographers and essayists. With spacious vision he marks and meets the destinies of dynasts and democrats in a manner, more than somewhat reminiscent of Arnold Toynbee, from whom some influence is unmistakable and may naturally date from when they were working together at Chatham House in the later 1940s.

McNeill's books to an unusual extent are parts of one grand concept, each dovetailing into the others already in the book. To the most ambitious, *Rise of the West* (1963), have now been added detailed studies of *Inner Asia*, the two determinant motives which ultimately explain it all, *Plagues and Peoples* (1977) spotlighted that side of what he takes to be fundamentally important: demographic change. *The Pursuit of Power*, carefully mindful of demography, is about what seem to him no less determinant: the sharp end: war and the men and means of war; what war has done in and to history, and what it will do to humanity in time to come.

So there is a sort of philosophy of history here as well as a fine display of,

behaviour" would reassert itself as industrial and (necessarily) bureaucratic power-conscious States organized society in the only way the ultimate requirements and necessities of war allowed. Not proletarian but military revolution would settle the post-bourgeois phase of human history. Of all the existing rivals, only Theodore Ropp's matches it in solid sense and scholarship, and the two complement each other nicely, for Ropp goes much more into essential battlefield matters but ventures hardly at all into the economic and socio-psychological explanations which attract McNeill so much. Always interesting and at least plausible, these are great fun and will arouse lively discussion: eg the gastronomic sources of northern European origins of the later nineteenth-century Irish problem, and the extraordinary importance of military music and close-order drill in the history of European imperialism. Some of these explanations rest in part upon McNeill's own military experiences. The soldier in the Second World War has not been without his uses to the historian of the human race. But very little that has been published since then in English, French or German seems to have scored his eye. He has mastered an enormous amount. One wishes one knew as much about anything as he knows about everything.

The more philosophical part of the book is not as powerful and persuasive as the ordinary historical, though much of it has power to startle and disturb. Armed might, not necessarily conspicuous or showy when neatly integrated with industrial economies and political regimes — McNeill takes to be the normal management of human affairs, and most periods of history appear in his Toynbeeian vision as ones when "command" mattered more than "the market". Marx, who appears a few times to be gently knocked on the head and put back in his Victorian box, is allowed to have perceived correctly enough the market's suppression of economic economies wherever and whenever the managers of trade, manufactures and finance got their act together against the men of land, blood and honour. What Marx didn't see was that "the human norm of command

behaviour" would reassert itself as industrial and (necessarily) bureaucratic power-conscious States organized society in the only way the ultimate requirements and necessities of war allowed. Not proletarian but military revolution would settle the post-bourgeois phase of human history. Of all the existing rivals, only Theodore Ropp's matches it in solid sense and scholarship, and the two complement each other nicely, for Ropp goes much more into essential battlefield matters but ventures hardly at all into the economic and socio-psychological explanations which attract McNeill so much. Always interesting and at least plausible, these are great fun and will arouse lively discussion: eg the gastronomic sources of northern European origins of the later nineteenth-century Irish problem, and the extraordinary importance of military music and close-order drill in the history of European imperialism. Some of these explanations rest in part upon McNeill's own military experiences. The soldier in the Second World War has not been without his uses to the historian of the human race. But very little that has been published since then in English, French or German seems to have scored his eye. He has mastered an enormous amount. One wishes one knew as much about anything as he knows about everything.

So slight, so short an ending seems perfunctory compared with the richness of learning and astuteness of thought of the earlier chapters, and it has to be said that the book falls off towards the end. Even McNeill, it appears, has managed no better than most of us the problem of getting his own generation into perspective. In thinning-out begins about the 1930s. The 1940s GI has actually been of more value to the historian of the reforms of Moltke Sr than to the analyst of the contemporary world. State he now finds himself inhibiting. It is therefore worth remarking in conclusion that where McNeill rather peters out, a good book published last year takes over: Maurice Pearson's *The Knowledgeable State*. From an account of the modern industrialization of war which has much in common with McNeill's more richly historical one, Pearson launches into a more searching exposé of the nature and needs of the military-industrial State. If we don't understand how we all came to be in the bowels of such a Leviathan-Behemoth, it won't be their fault.

Protestant designs

Sarah Wintle

GEORGIA B. CHRISTOPHER

Milton and the Silence of the Saints
264pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £16.80.
0 691 06508 8

JOHN N. KING
English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition
339pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £28.
0 691 06502 0

Protestantism, in its earlier forms at least, was a pugnacious and combative religion, and its literature had no doubts about the desirability of having palpable designs upon its readers. Georgia B. Christopher quotes Luther: "As soon as the Word of God appears the devil becomes angry", and Calvin, "There is always a battle with the Word of God." Her book is concerned to fight through the smoke of battle to the way in which Milton's design illuminates God's word. John King's book focuses on the literature of the reign of Edward VI. This literature, which is largely polemical in intent, is seen by King as laying the foundations of that Protestant tradition of writing which culminates in Milton.

King's writing of Protector Somerset's activities as a literary patron, makes the point that Somerset permitted greater freedom of speech and publication than at any point prior to that period between the opening of the Long Parliament in November 1640 and the issuance of the Licensing order of 14 June 1643.

Protestant pugnaciousness from John Bale to John Milton is a claim for, as well as a result of, a liberty of speech which is thought vital because of an unshakable belief in the primacy of the Word and words about the Word. Professor Christopher sees Milton's poems as essentially works about God's Word, and she is able to use this Protestant emphasis to positive literary effect. Her book, in outline at least, is boldy simple. The "silence of

the Saints" is that articulated by Luther and Calvin, and she offers a reading of four major poems — *Comus*, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* — in the light of the two reformers' "theology of the Word". Their status as heroic originators means that they convey particularly well "the sense of excitement, even numinosity, in reading sacred texts". In short, their work is used as the work of critical theorists, rather than as historical sources or as key texts in the history of ideas.

The book attempts to reconstruct Milton's fit audience's "structure of apprehension", its ready consciousness, and thus, draws attention to how the poems are written so as to deepen and enliven that consciousness, just as the two reformers saw the understanding of the faithful moved and deepened by a proper reading and understanding of the Bible. While Christopher has some good things to say about all the poems, it is the central chapters on *Paradise Lost* that are the most stimulating and various.

The epic, it is argued, is built round a series of epiphanic moments, when heavenly and earthly perspectives coincide, or when all aspects of God's word — as report, as act, as promise — come together and so blind present and future. Such moments are elusive within the poem and their potential is realized differently on different readings. Although this idea, as pursued by Christopher, does offer a sensitive account of what it is like to read and re-read the poem, it might have been more helpful if she had been more open about the similarities and differences between her approach and those of other devotees of reader-response theory.

The main strength of the book, though, lies in the way it explores the poems as dramas of consciousness, not only for their readers, but also for their protagonists. No more than the reader can Adam be a "heretic in the truth", and both are implicated not only towards an awareness of all, but also towards a new understanding of wider doctrinal truths. Many interesting things are said of the poem and Eve's consciousness of the Word of God. There is, for example, a suggestive account of Eve's arguments for wanting to go gardening alone, where

it is proposed, following a comment of another's, that her fault is too great a use of her reason in adding detail to God's commands. Adam, in contrast, by accepting considerations of pleasure before those of efficiency rests rightly for a brief moment — in his unmerited but God-given freedom to enjoy.

Inevitably, as this example shows, such arguments about a correct doctrinal consciousness are most exposed by Milton's dislikeable God, with whom both the Devil and the reader are only too inclined to become angry. It is one of the virtues of this book that it gives us glimpses of what it might be like to read *Paradise Lost* with the eye of faith; such glimpses correspond with the poem's epiphanic moments. None the less the argument also implies that in this poem the combativeness of Protestantism is neatly projected on to God's opponents. Professor Christopher, in a quiet way, has written a suitably provocative book.

In order to write his book, Professor King has read a great deal of not very good writing, and he has not always asked if the kind of question that might make it interesting. Too often the file-cards can be heard rustling, and the book's very real information as regards particular writers is not deployed so as to illuminate the book's larger theme.

King has divided his material into two sections, "The Reformation Background" and "Literature during the English Reformation", of which the first treating of questions of patronage, the book trade, the place of the arts of the court of Edward VI, and Biblical translations, is the more interesting. The second section examines figures like Robert Crowley, editor of *Piers Plowman*, and William Baldwin, a satirist for whom unconceivably high claims are made. The Protestant use of medieval texts is an important topic, but the book's rather unexamined notions of literary influence, and its use of orthodox critical categories more usefully applied to more conventionally valuable texts, means that the issues raised are not fully explored. None the less the book does provide a pretty comprehensive survey of writing written during the English Reformation.

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commentary



"King Lear" by James Barry, from the exhibition reviewed on the facing page. This was the only lithograph Barry made, and specimens of polyautography in which it appeared in 1803 marked the first extensive use of lithography as an artistic medium. Barry here adapted the figure of the king from his painting "King Lear Weeping Over the Body of Cordelia", 1786-87.

Anglo-Saxon platitudes

Stephen Pickles

EMMANUEL CHABRIER

Gwendoline

Bloomsbury Theatre

Emmanuel Chabrier was the composer of *Souvenirs de Munich*, some betsy quasi-quadrilles for piano duet, in which the "Liebestod" becomes a parlour prank, along with other hallowed leitmotifs. In *Gwendoline*, however, his admiration for Wagner is serious without swamping his own invention. There are Wagnerian colours in the orchestration; in the second act love-duet harmony and gentle rhythmic pulsing recall specific moments in the second act of *Tristan*. Chabrier's use of clarinets is equally suggestive, and the harmonic cast of the prelude to Act Two might be Mahler or soupy Shostakovich. Yet the overwhelming impression is of that particular kind of lyrical gravity which is of the essence of French nineteenth-century music. There is especial grandeur and sustaining ingenuity in the choruses, which are strongly and often beautifully sung by the University College Opera Chorus, in this first British production of the work.

The silliness of the piece comes not from Chabrier but from his librettist, Camille Maupré. The story itself would make one nervous of staging the opera: peaceful Saxons versus marauding Danes; Gwendoline, a Saxon beauty,

daughter of the chieftain; Harald, an uncouth invader who has never seen a woman (despite one's suspicion that he has repudiated several hundred); love at first sight, epithalamion, and then the Saxons' vengeance on the celebrating unarmed Danes. The lovers die in each other's arms, leaning against a tree-trunk, and silhouetted against a symbolic sunset – the Valhalla that awaits them.

French is perhaps too mellifluous a language for such strong stuff. When Gwendoline gives Harald the dagger with which she has been supposed to kill him, what else can he say but "Merci"? Late nineteenth-century manners are rather refined in an eighteenth-century fur-clad lout, despite his conversion by feminine beauty. Alexander Gauld's pronunciation occasionally suggests that Gwendoline has not had the time to teach him all she would have liked. Yet he sings a very "tasteful" role with stinging forthright in the low notes as well as in the many high ones. Gwendoline is effectively sung by Juliet Oppenheimer. Her soprano has an appropriately French *timbre*, and is strong enough to sustain the higher register in the role, against remarkable orchestral odds. At times Hugh Hetherington sounds rather tired but he is sufficiently dignified as Arnel the Saxon chieftain to support the filmier qualities of the libretto. In the minor roles, James Murray and Simon Cambridge sing and act with keen conviction.

The production itself is spirited and energetic. Several difficult moments might have been more thoughtfully staged. Gwendoline rushes around too much whenever her troubled dream of the Danish invasion recurs. Focusing her anxieties more, and letting the orchestra depict their turbulence, would have given her character greater stature. The chorus want discretion in the over-zealous battle-scenes, and the producer, Michael Worlton, would have done better to solve rather than to reveal these problems. Sarah-Jane McClelland, his designer, has more success with necessary economy. Though the overture could have been tougher, the achievement of the conductor, Christopher Fifield, and his orchestra is very fine given the demands of the score, and the circumstances under which such university productions take place.

The deep influence of Chabrier's music on Ravel – especially its hispanism, and the *Valses Romantiques* and *Musique pour piano* which the younger composer orchestrated in 1918 – is one of the elements traced in *Maurice Ravel, Variations on His Life and Work* by H. H. Stuckenschmidt, which has just been re-issued in paperback (22pp, John Calder, £4.55, 0 7145 0025 9).

Down among the dead

Peter Kemp

Arena: Burroughs
BBC2

"In the US", William Burroughs once said, "you have to be a deviant or exist in dreary boredom." *Arena's* profile of him showed that it's possible to be a deviant and exist in dreary boredom. Despite its jumble of variegated scenes – presumably a homage to Burroughs's fictional procedures – the programme soon lapsed into monotony. Like its addict author, it returned fixatedly to the same points.

Scenes from Burroughs's life and extracts from his novels emphasized that he has long been possessed by a fear of being taken over. Keeping detached is his main preoccupation. Born into a wealthy suburb, he was reared amid affluent respectability. His school subscribed to a robustly wholesome ethos of fresh air and exercise. Here, though, he nursed a guilty secret: a diary into which he poured fond effusions about a young chum. And homosexuality, it seems, has remained a worry for him. "We are a precarious minority," he abruptly insisted. "We got to fight for our lives." Bequeathed by conventionality in youth, Burroughs appears to have spent most of his life barricading his autonomy. "Hell," he has said, "consists of falling into enemy hands." Fantasies about encroachment fill his fiction: forces of repression snoop and probe, aliens try to infiltrate human bodies, surgery assaults and rearranges people. In life, too, Burroughs stays ferociously on his guard. Filmed in his windowless bunker in the Bowery, he toyed tremulously with the armoury he

hoards to fight off attack – a gun, a blackjack with a razor, a menacing dagger.

Slicing into things, of course, is a Burroughs speciality. Like most of his traits, it seems to spring from an urge to slash out at conformity. His cut-up technique – pages chopped in half and randomly re-shuffled – sabotages customary patterns. His narratives deliberately burst fictional conventions: structure is ruptured and content bitily tossed around – just as bodies are in the many surgical operations his pages bloodily itemize.

Burroughs decisively severed connection with his background by joining the Beat writers. Involvement with Kerouac and Ginsberg showed him the way to cut loose. Liberated into drug-dependence, he settled into a very self-entranced world. Cruelly, the programme exhumed a few survivors from that period to reminisce retardingly about the Bohemian high-jinks that ensued. Terry Southern crowded with mirth over a drunken driving trip to Mexico. Ginsberg and Burroughs creakily re-enacted a party-piece. A more grisly prank was also recalled: the drunken game of "William Tell" that ended with the woman Burroughs then lived with, Joan Adams, being shot through the forehead by him. She was "sort of like using him to get her off the earth," Ginsberg explained, adding that the experience gave Burroughs "a taste of mortality". Not so stiff a dose as it dished out to Joan, of course. And, in any case, it hardly seems to have sobered him. Pistol-practice was a favourite pastime when he moved on to Tangier. Film of his son Billy eloquently testified to a continuing ability to damage those within domestic range.

The end of exploration

Richard Combs

Identification of a Woman
Camden Plaza

The final images of *Identification of a Woman* take us a long way from the kind of cinema usually associated with Michelangelo Antonioni. A specialist effects artist – or, as the film-maker hero describes it for the benefit of his nephew, a spacecraft prettily disguised as an asteroid – sails off into just as prettily coloured a vision of the cosmos, where man will learn "how the universe is made and the cause of things". To which the nephew responds, "And then...?" It is as neat and – in a subtitled film – as verbally poignant a summation as one could hope for; it is also slyly funny, which is characteristic of this film but again out of key with Antonioni's image. Even when everything has been explained, the need for stories, for adventures, will not be satisfied; film director Niccolò (Tomas Milian) has to remember that his job is not to explore but to narrate.

More than this, Niccolò even comes to feel the futility of exploring. Towards the end, he apologizes to one of the women who have been co-opted in his quest to identify "the" woman. The exploration of the unknown is nothing, it seems, compared with the Sphinx-like mystery of the known world. "While we talk the world changes," Niccolò says to a man who seems to be his script collaborator, "becoming ever more impenetrable". In his efforts to define what his next film will be about – "a feeling with feminine contours" – Niccolò has passed various photographs on a noticeboard, a collage attempt at identifying the "ideal woman". One of these shows a pair of lovers who were terrorists, whose romantic identity was, righteously clear in terms of their pasts, their aims, their ideology. "It's the normal relationship that's tough," declares Niccolò, and at the end he will be upbraided for trying to impose a "director's solution" on just such a normal (ie indefinable) relationship.

The toughest thing to define about *Identification of a Woman* is why this restatement of what Antonioni has essentially been saying since 1960 should seem so vibrant and inventive – possibly the most intellectually and visually sparkling of all his films. Part of the explanation is the film's ironic humour, during of the cobwebs of 1960s alienation, which was felt first to be Antonioni's brave new subject and then itself a feature of his glacial style.

Identification bristles with symptoms of alienation, except that in bristling it also generates something positive, a certain warmth that one might also not have expected. In turn, the explanation for this may be that Antonioni has put more of himself into the picture, portraying himself in Niccolò, the author in search of a subject, and his regular script-writer Tonino Guerra in the man with whom Niccolò jokes about the changing world that remains closed to them. He also pokes fun at the implacable seriousness of his own image.

The film is fired by a basic contradiction in mood, a sense of alienation within engagement. Its settings have the solidity of local observation, filmed in Rome and taking in a spectrum of high and low life, fringe and dropout culture, and some mordant details of apartment living. It begins with Niccolò returning to Rome, to the apartment he shared with his now ex-wife. He describes her as a fearful woman who left with her fear but left behind the alarm – a walling device which Niccolò triggers while trying to get into the apartment. Once inside, Niccolò makes use of a telephone that seems to work like a walkie-talkie, and naturally has recourse to that arch device of communication-as-insulation, the answering machine. "The trappings of his life suggest the paranoia of a detective movie, particularly a 1950s Cold War classic like *Kiss Me Deadly*, the hysteria of which is controlled by Antonioni's coolness. But both the private-eye format and the political connotations of that film are soon picked up here. By telephone, Niccolò happens to meet a girl, Mavi (Daniela Silverio), who comes from the rich and powerful end of the spectrum, who has

a strangely importunate, protective father, and with whom Niccolò now feels himself threatened, followed and plotted against.

But Mavi is the closest Niccolò comes to finding the personification of what he is trying to express in an amorphous project. When she subsequently disappears, her wall closes against Niccolò, and it is through the detective work of another woman, Ida (Christine Boisson), that he eventually traces her. The visual story in *Time* magazine, in which his father has featured as a representative of "Europe's Women that so preoccupy Niccolò. By now, the local observation of *Identification of a Woman* has taken in much of Antonioni's past history. The search for Mavi recalls the "lost woman" of *L'Avventura*, and the ambiguities of perception of *Blow-up* – the photographs Niccolò scrutinizes for some clue to his own intentions, are compounded with menacing confusion (footsteps in the fog, for example). Niccolò becomes lost on a country road).

The remoteness of Niccolò's task might also suggest Monica Vitti, reincarnated, except for the fact that there is more than one candidate for the position here. Ida is an actress, the opposite end of the social spectrum from Mavi, and with a warmth that dissolves at least one of the barriers that makes Mavi so ideal. "I am the person like you are," she tells Niccolò, when he doubts her ability to understand what he is looking for – "only by chance of a different sex."

It is Niccolò's misfortune, perhaps, that he doesn't recognize his place in this girl Friday, although what he does end takes Ida out of Niccolò's orbit. The fact that she represents that great unknownable to Antonioni – youth. Not the past, but the new generation is a foreign country to Antonioni's hero – and youth, the things they do differently (there is much talk of "masculinism" and "feminism", and Mavi pursues her living with another "strong" man, wonder he is left at the end in the turning his future film into an exploration of the outer limits).

Self-portraits

Marc Jordan

James Barry: The Artist as Hero
Tate Gallery

James Barry (1741-1806) was undeniably a "case". The inflated value he put on himself as a painter and the stance of embattled genius which he adopted still loom over any assessment of what he achieved. His personality has come to seem more interesting than his art and this difficult, obsessive man has been co-opted by the twentieth century as a Romantic *avant la lettre*. "The Artist as Hero", Barry's own implicit estimation of himself, is the subtitle of the catalogue William L. Pressly has written to go with his selection of Barry's work (167pp, Tate Gallery, £4.50, 0 905005 09 0).

Barry's life history does indeed read like the textbook case of the alienated (and alienating) Romantic artist. An Irish Catholic, he was taken up by Edmund Burke who encouraged his burning passion to revive history painting as an exalted moral and political force. Burke, who remained a remarkably good friend and mentor despite all Barry's ungratefulness, packed him off to Rome, where he soon quarrelled with everyone who might have helped him in his career and began suffering from the paranoid delusions which amounted to dementia by the end of his life. After he returned to London in 1771 his output was small. Most of what survives is shown at the Tate. He worried and nagged at the same themes for years. Where wiser men, some of them better painters, listened to Reynolds's lectures on the Grand Style and quietly got on with the less exalted genres of painting which are the glory of eighteenth-century British art, Barry refused to compromise. He turned down several commissions because the would-be patrons wanted their pictures done faster and smaller than a whole wall. He eventually got the chance to do this in six monumental canvases for the Society of Arts illustrating the compendious theme *The Progress of Human Culture* (these are too big to move but can be seen at the SA on Monday afternoons from 1.00 to 5.00 until March 14). But he only got the commission, which he worked on for eight years, by offering his services for pin money. He led a life of great austerity and self-imposed isolation during the production of his *magnum opus* and never got over the coolness of the reception the public gave it. Barry's fellow artists recognized his undoubted talents when they appointed him Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy in 1782. But his self-destructive behaviour eventually led to

the martyrdom he seemed to be seeking when he became the only academician ever to be expelled (for his slanders against other members). In his later years of bitterness and disappointment he rarely left his dilapidated house off Oxford Street where he lived in fear of a murderous plot by his ex-colleagues. He painted very little, but his closely-written commonplace book is a pathetic reminder of the stream of publications and letters in which he attacked the indifference of British patrons to high art and explained his own failure in terms of hostile plots and cabals.

After all this it is not surprising to discover that the subject which most engaged Barry was himself. His most successful pictures, a handful of them masterpieces, are either self-portraits or pictures which are in some less direct way autobiographical. The best of these lie outside the strict confines of the "Grand Style" either because they are portraits or because they are subject pictures conceived as small-scale illustrations.

The series of self-portraits collected at the Tate is a moving document of aspiration and disappointment. The young Barry appears most heroically with Burke in the early canvas "Ulysses and a Companion fleeing from Polyphemus". Its curious *mise-en-scène* is much more than a conceit and strongly suggests occult meanings. The disturbing intensity of this image continues undiminished through a series of roles cast by Barry for himself. He is by turns the heroic victim of envy and the lonely martyr until at last this eighteenth-century Passion ends with an "Ecce Homo" as the naked man is revealed: two drawings of unforgettable sadness.

In much the same way that Barry turned himself into drama he came to inhabit some of his own subject pictures. The superior energy of these images stands out immediately. These Philoctetes, in a series of increasingly dark etchings, becomes the artist cast out by society, his hideous wound the stigma of genius. Another outcast hero, Lear, weeps and gestures across a canvas nine feet by twelve with all the exaggerated fury of a Kemble or a Macready. Yet the final effect is impressively close to the Sublime. More impressive still, precisely because telescoped into an area of a few square inches, are the illustrations to *Paradise Lost* which made such an impression on Keats. Barry's Satan, a heroic individualist confronting the oppressive hierarchy of Heaven, is the most complete sublimation of Barry's sense of himself into his art. These engravings, together with the self-portraits, are the living part of Barry's effort.

But Barry's *oeuvre* is very uneven. High ambition and a belief in a heroic



James Barry's "Self-Portrait, a sketch", c 1780, from the exhibition reviewed here.

destiny are not enough to make a great painter. Put in context, *The Progress of Human Culture* is the most impressive achievement of the Grand Style in Britain in the eighteenth century. Yet it is almost completely devoid of painterly qualities – a fact which is clear enough even from the photographs and engravings at the Tate.

It is disappointing that Pressly's catalogue does not confront the problems raised by so comprehensive a show where images of intense energy hang side by side with paintings of such flaccidity. Barry seems to have lacked the finer edge of intelligence, and he certainly lacked a sense of humour. His canvases constantly teeter on the brink of the absurd. Even Rubens would have steered clear of an allegory that put Drake, Raleigh, Captain Cook and Bar Borney up to their waists in the Thames with a party of naked tritons and nereids. Unlike Copley, Barry hardly tried to develop a modern heroic idiom. And unlike David, whose role as painter-legislator of the French Revolution he so much envied, he could rarely put his moral and political statements into Classical dress with conviction.

Too many of Barry's pictures are vitiated by a lack of courage in

execution to match the loftiness of their ambition. He drew feebly on a large scale, reproducing the graceful filleted flesh typical of the English Neo-Classicalists. In the late "Jupiter and Juno on Mount Io" (the only erotic nudity in the show), he is moving towards an abstract patterning of anatomy which calls to mind Ingres. But we experience the entwined lines of the torsos not as fluidity but simply as bad drawing. Likewise, Barry eschewed sumptuous colour, presumably for the usual Classicist reasons, but he did not have the courage to use the strict and exciting disharmonies of his French contemporaries. Instead he painted in the fuscous tones recommended by Burke in his *Essay on the Sublime*.

The Tate gives us all the contradictory evidence of Barry's major surviving works to draw our conclusions from. But William Pressly's catalogue too easily acquiesces in the idea that anything less than a Romantic genius will bore us. If James Barry is interesting it is not simply because he could paint himself so movingly; it is because he couldn't paint the *grandes machines* he so earnestly desired to paint with anything like the same conviction.

New Oxford books:

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The Nature of Political Theory

Edited by David Miller and Larry Siedentop

Political theory has re-emerged in the last two decades as a distinct discipline, but its character has not been fully elucidated. The editors examine this rebirth, and discuss the relationship between political theory, analytical political philosophy, and social science. Ten distinguished contributors then explore methodological issues in political theory, and analyse such concepts as the state power, nationality, democracy, and rules. £17.50

Marxism and Philosophy

Alex Callinicos

This book provides an overview of the ambivalent relationship between Marxism and philosophy. Starting with Marx himself and the influence of Hegelianism, the author surveys the various schools of Marxist philosophy, from the time of Engels and the Second International, through the revolutionary Hegelianism of the 1920s, the Frankfurt School, and finally Althusser. £9.50 Marxist introductions

Fellow Travellers of the Right

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Richard Griffiths

In the mid-1930s, British approval of Nazi Germany was at its height, and could be found among people in all walks of life and of most political opinions. This book documents the rise and fall of this tendency, by treating individual cases and by mapping the changes within political movements and the press. £3.95 Oxford Paperbacks

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Raymond Williams

Raymond Williams discusses Cobbett's ideas and ideas, in particular his views on poverty and property, on liberty, and on education. He places Cobbett in context in the history of radical thought, and establishes the lasting importance of his tireless contribution to the debate about how society should be organized. £7.95 Past Masters paperback £1.75

A Family Affair

India under Three Prime Ministers

Ved Mehta

Ved Mehta here confronts the issue of nepotism in Indian politics. He discusses Indira Gandhi's rule, her attempts to reshape Indian politics in her personal image, her defeat at the polls in 1977 – which he calls the greatest modern political upset – and her triumphant return to power in 1980. He describes the accidental death of Sanjay Gandhi, her eldest son and political heir, and speculates as to what they may mean for India's political future. £12.50

Oxford University Press

Brotherly love

Harold Hobson

Peter Gill

Kick for Touch

Cottoloco Theatre

Peter Gill's *Kick for Touch* is an emotional experience, not an exercise in piecing together the odds and ends of a puzzle, as many people have thought. It is not to be apprehended by the intellect. Its shifts in time; the appearance and disappearance of characters – who nevertheless still remain on the stage; the suggestion of marriages – which have been consummated and broken; the early absorption in arguments about Rugby (Kenneth Cranham) and Jim (James Hazeldine), who sit at opposite ends of a plain deal table in a bare room, with a woman, Ellen (Jane Lapotnik), sitting between them; even their exact relationships – all these are matters which if the audience troubles about them during the progress of the play, are more likely to produce, in the most important sense, a headache than aesthetic pleasure. The play's effect depends largely on the free-ranging associations and memories the audience brings to it. On me its effect was great; and it grows greater with every moment of subsequent reflection.

Between the two men, who are almost certainly brothers, there are frustrated friendship, affection and jealousy. These are manifest in their early squabbles over football (who has been selected to play, and who hasn't) and they are more powerful still in their arguments over the woman. She is married to Joe when the play opens, married to Joe when the more passionate, the more capable of violence, the less agile in brain, and the richer in family affection of the brothers. He dotes on his young son, and, in the midst of emotional turmoil, is anxious about his health, about his meals, about every aspect of his well-being. "Let him go," says Ellen desperately. But she is thinking, not of the boy, but of Jim, for she is aware of the danger to come. Jim does not go, and later there is another child, and then a terrible and bloody catastrophe. "There is no God," cries Ellen; and this "Nothing happened," I tell you,

nothing happened". But the second child is born anyway, whether anything happened or not, and Joe is distracted wondering whose child it is, his or Jim's. It is Jim's all right. That is one of the few points on which the audience can have no doubts. And Joe, beyond all control, cries out about blood, streams of blood, staining the counterpane, and about his taking the mangled baby into his own bed. "I wish," says Ellen (and we almost freeze), "I wish it had been the other." There is a fight between the brothers, and as they lie locked together, motionless, perhaps dead, on the floor, Ellen (the sole person in the play to have physically left the stage at any time) re-appears, holding a young boy by one hand, and with a baby over her shoulder. There is no mark of blood anywhere; but the boy's face has a look of horror and fear, and we remember that Greek tragedy abhors the overt sign of violence. Its murders, are narrated, not seen.

What is haunting about *Kick for Touch* is that, with only one change of gear, it passes from the utmost banality into the terror of the utmost banality. The moment of change is marked by the moment of change as

punitively as did Racine, the moment when Mavi turned from good to evil. It comes when Joe drops the refrain of a popular song, one of those songs played by Kipling's banjo, those common, trivial songs that make you choke and blow your nose. When Kenneth Cranham softly and beautifully croons "Are you loonesome tonight", unstoppable by the encroaching and aggressive conversation with which his brother tries to overlay the verse, the play passes from the level of banality to that of lyric poetry.

Gill's production is of great simplicity, precision and power, and his players, Cranham especially, achieve the move from banality to terror and exaltation with every appearance of ease.

Forthcoming new productions at the National Theatre include Alfred De Musset's *Lorenzaccio*, in a version by John Fowles, directed by Michael Bogdanov, opening on March 15; and Sheridan's *The Rivals*, directed by Peter Wood, which opens on April 12; both will be in the Olivier Theatre.

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American notes

Christopher Hitchens

There is a concept, not peculiar to America but somehow special to it, which defines whether a topic or a person is chic or controversial or otherwise worthy of note. The media vernacular for this concept is "visibility". Visibility is, naturally, variable to the point of fickleness. Noam Chomsky, say, used to be highly visible but now is not. Norman Mailer and Gore Vidal have it while John Cheever, I think, did not. To be "visible", a figure or an issue need not be popular or in vogue. It is possible to be quite *démodé* (like Elizabeth Taylor) but still to be instantly recognizable even after prolonged absence from the centre stage. Those without visibility are said to wish that they possessed it. Some who have it wonder how they acquired it. A few wish they could lose it. Among the rare last category must be Susan Sontag.

She brings out the best in people. Only counting the last two months, she has been savaged in a long piece in *Harpers* magazine and ridiculed by senior columnists for merely attending a Paris congress sponsored by the French Ministry of Culture. The critical attack, written by one Marvin Muddick of the University of California, lampooned her efforts on behalf of Roland Barthes, and scorned her Cagelike essay on the sounds made by silence. It made sport of her affection for Oscar Wilde's idea of style. It also referred to her throughout as "Susie Creamcheese". This, for the uninitiated, is an American schoolyard vulgarity ("Creamcheese" spreads so easily) suggestive of a looseness more than stylistic. It's hard to think offhand of a male author of similar stature who would be described in public in this way. One need not, in fact, be too solemn in overhearing a sexual energy behind some of the sallies, just as the echoes of the last row die away. Ms Sontag scandalized much of New York last spring by comparing General Jaruzelski to a fascist - a remark which could only really be

criticized for its want of originality. Underneath all the taunting on that occasion was the definite (but deniable) suggestion that a woman was somehow speaking beyond her competence.

As for the Paris meeting, it hardly seems odd - since she lives there for part of each year and has served almost as an official greater for French writing in the United States - that she would attend a banquet for intellectuals held in that city. Yet down again came a hail of contumely - including almost a whole column in the *Washington Post*. Mere gallantry compels me to say that all this is very strange.

This being the country of the future, it's been decided to experience 1984 one year early. The literary press is full of Orwell assessments; all of them written with the impending date as their theme and some of them presumably published in case anybody else had the same idea and pre-empted the competition. Irving Howe has written gravely about collectivism in his original 1948 review; it has been alleged that Orwell liked most of his plot from Evgeny Zamyatin's *We*, and I have been teased and gored by a mighty Norman Podhoretz in a public exchange over whether Orwell, had he lived, would or would not have metamorphosed into a conservative. Re-reading the collected works of the above-mentioned purpose, I found two things that one wishes had happened and one corking tale about American publishing. The two regrets are that Orwell never finished his review of *Bridgeshead Revisited* and that Albert Camus never turned up at the projected meeting at the Café Deux Magots. The corking story, which comes in a letter to Leonard Moore, is best recounted in Orwell's own words:

I'm not sure whether one can count on the American public grasping

what it is about. You may remember that the Dial Press had been asking me for some time for a manuscript, but when I sent the MS of *Animal Farm* in 1944 they returned it, saying shortly that "it was impossible to sell animal stories in the USA".

Dispirited authors up against know-all publishers should, I feel, have this clipping pasted in their hats.

Of the making of jokes about differences between American and British speech, there is no end. Many of the best-known anecdotes are simplistic and unsatisfactory because they rely on straight *double entendre* or upon the old gag about our different understanding of the expression "knocked out". Edmund Fawcett's and Tony Thomas's book *America, Americans* (reviewed by Anthony Quinton in the TLS, January 28) is praiseworthy in many ways, not least for giving what is arguably the definitive account of the Great Anglo-American Linguistic Philosophy Incident. The story, which circulates in a number of versions, concerns a lecture given by J. L. Austin at Columbia University. In a slightly maddening fashion, the old maestro was illustrating that the double negative construction in English ("He did not say nothing") entails an affirmative statement ("He did say something"). How curious it was, he droned, that there was no equal and opposite formulation whereby a double affirmative might result in a negative. Sidney Morgenbesser, a fine philosopher, a good man and one used to the rhythm of New York speech, put us all in his debt at that moment by interjecting a flawless taxi-driver's "Yeah, yeah" and thus affirming the negation of the negation.

Every time I read a thumb-sucking article about how, in the United States, the printed word is on the point of

being overwhelmed by television, cable and video, I close my eyes and remember all those boring theses about the imminent death of the novel. Another means of refuting this witless "long term analysis and projection" is to try and count the number of extant literary and generalist magazines. It's like being trapped in Borges's infinite library. For a start, almost every university has one, and they provide tremendous opportunities for getting on the record. Debates that kindle and flash in the grand public prints very often go underground, like a smouldering fire in a seam of coal, only to re-ignite in some far-off quarterly. Professor Frank Kermode has, I see, chosen this means of replying to Dame Helen Gardner. For the benefit of those who do not receive *Raritan*, published four times a year by Rutgers University, here is the juice. Professor Kermode was, it will be recalled, given a mention or two in Dame Helen's Norton Lectures at Harvard in 1979-80; lectures which he had himself delivered two years earlier. Her subsequent book, *In Defence of the Imagination*, which was based on the lectures, was similarly unsparring about Professor Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy*. Here is the flavour of his reply:

Dame Helen thinks modern literary criticism is in a bad way and, however sadly, attributes a surprisingly large part of the blame to me. I too think literary criticism is ailing but suppose that a more accurate diagnosis might be had from an examination of her Norton Lectures than of mine.

The "suppose" is very well placed there. But the Kermode sense of proportion is not always so judiciously sustained. He manages to compare Dame Helen's allies and arguments with Hitler and with Stalin. In case I'm suspected of exaggeration, let me quote. In an attack on the pro-Gardner Howard Erskine-Hill, Professor Kermode measures out his irony with ferro-concrete: "No one, I suppose,

will fail to be impressed by the moderation with which Erskine-Hill deploys an argument earlier used by, among others, Stalin against the kulaks." This, on behalf of a contested view of "the human world" and the occasional necessity to be incoherent in its defence. Is the Kermode quiver exhausted? By no means. Towards the end of his critique, he abandons euphemism and avers that "everything she says about my treatment of types and testimonies is either superfluous or false". In case that rebuke should be thought insufficiently exhaustive, he adds suggestively: "That the term of such thinking is the Nazi Third Reich is another topic upon which ample instruction is available."

No letters, please, about "quoting out of context". One does not have to be a deconstructionist to know that quotation is out of context. Professor Kermode has a good beef against Dame Helen and scores well off her a number of points. He should have kept Stalin and Hitler out of it and his reply deserved, as we have reviewed are fond of saying, a wider audience. Why confine himself to *Raritan*!

On this secrecy business, Stella Rd has a lot to say. The American parks is a kind of flux between confidentiality and candour. This guessing game familiar to anyone who has experienced American warmth, is a puzzle. There is a real desire for openness and a real need for reserve. There is the gushing confessional of Washington, and the grim secrecy of the South. There is the immediate but name, first time of New York and the constipated etiquette of the Mid West. Thus Bok's subtitle *On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation* (Harvard University Press) embodies an aphoristic truth about the United States, if one could only decode it. *Raritan* is available from Rutgers University, 165 College Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08903, USA, at \$12 a year, plus \$12 for air mail.

Among this week's contributors

GERALD ABRAHAM is the editor of *The Age of Beethoven*, Volume III of *The New Oxford History of Music*, 1982.

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VICTORIA GLENDINNING's biography of Edith Sitwell, *A Unicorn Among Lions*, was published in 1981.

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K. H. D. HALEY's *The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century* was published in 1977.

ROBERT HALSBAND's most recent book, *The Rape of the Lock and its Illustrations 1714-1896*, was published in 1980.

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Author, Author

Competition No 112

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than April 1. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or falling that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 112" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on April 8.

1 "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*. If you read it you must stop where the Nigger Jim is stolen from the boys. That is the real end. The rest is just cheating. But it's the best book we've had. All American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since."

2 I saw Gertrude Stein on the screen of a newsworld theatre one afternoon and I heard her read that famous passage of hers about pigeons on the grass, alas (the sorrow is, as you know, Miss Stein's). After reading about the pigeons on the grass alas, Miss Stein said "This is a simple description of a landscape I have seen many times." I don't really believe that that is true. Pigeons on the grass alas may be a simple description of Miss Stein's own consciousness, but it is not a simple description of a plot of grass on which pigeons have alighted, are alighting, or are going to alight.

3 "The moment I started your book, I remember feeling - it was such a refreshing different feeling: why, this is the sort of book I used to read when I was a girl, a real old-fashioned novel. I felt as if I were just about to curl up in a window-seat with *Little Women*. And that's the sort of thing you can't fake - I'll bet you've often curled up in a window-seat with *Little Women*."

Competition No 108

Winner: Mrs June Benn

Answers:

1 Wine-drinking in England is, after all, only make-believe, a mere playing with an exotic inspiration. Tennyson had his part, where he clings a good old tradition; sherry, says drinks are not for us. Let him who will, toy with dubious Bordeaux or Burgundy; to get good of them, soul's good, you must be on the green side of thirty. Once or twice they have plucked me from despair; I would not speak unkindly of anything in cask or bottle which bears the great name of wine. But for me it is a thing of days gone by.

George Gissing, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, "Autumn", XX.

2 I like Claret whenever I can have Claret I must drink it. For really it is so fine - it fills the mouth one's mouth with a gushing freshness - then goes down cool and feverless - then you do not feel it quelling with your liver - no it is rather a Peace-maker and lies as quiet as it did in the grape.

John Keats, letter to the George Keates, February 19, 1819.

3 Those were drinking days, and most men drank hard. So very great is the improvement Time has brought about in such habits, that a moderate statement of the quantity of wine and punch which one man would swallow in the course of a night, without any detriment to his reputation as a perfect gentleman, would seem, in these days, a ridiculous exaggeration.

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, book 2, chapter 5.

Solvers of TLS competitions may be interested in Michelle Amot's *A History of the Crossword Puzzle* (1980; Macmillan, £4.95, 0 333 34347 5) which traces their progress from riddles and rebuses through the first crossword ever set (on December 21, 1913) to the present day, and includes forty-seven famous puzzles.

MICHAEL HOFMANN's poems have appeared in *Poetry Introduction* 5.

PAMELA HORN is the author of *A Georgian Parson and his Village*, 1981.

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The multiplication of the living

Lewis Wolpert

ERNST MAYR

The Growth of Biological Thought: Diversity, Evolution, and Inheritance 974pp. Harvard University Press. £21. 06/4364457

Biology is now the most exciting of the sciences. It contains great problems still to be solved—how the brain works and how embryos develop. The internal workings of the cell are still mysterious. No longer could a physicist like Rutherford dismiss biology as "postage-stamp collecting". Much of this new status has come from the tremendous advances brought about by understanding at the molecular level. But it is not from this viewpoint that Ernst Mayr, the distinguished evolutionary biologist, has set out to write a history of biological ideas. His is much more a "whole animal" approach, informed by consideration of the diversity of nature and the evolutionary synthesis.

Physics and chemistry have dominated the history and philosophy of science, and Mayr has tried to redress what he sees as an intolerable imbalance. Biology is different from the physical sciences, with its own special characteristics and history. His claim for the autonomy of biology is based on the differences between living and inanimate objects, such as the possession of a genetic programme and uniqueness, and, in addition, the ethical implications of biology. Diversity, Mayr argues, makes biology quite different from physics. No two individuals in sexually reproducing populations are the same, and the number of species is enormous—even now, 10,000 new ones are described each year. While the purpose of mechanistic explanations was to further the unity of science, the almost unlimited diversity of animals and plants studied by biologists prompts a diametrically opposed procedure.

Mayr's approach to biological ideas reflects his distaste for reductionism—attempts to reduce biological phenomena to the laws of physical sciences: "attempts at a reduction of purely biological phenomena, or concepts to the laws of physical sciences, have rarely, if ever, led to any advances in our understanding". He is not very fond of experiments either. "Observation in biology has probably produced more insights than all experiments combined." Such views must be totally unacceptable to many biologists. It is the aim and achievement of molecular biology and biophysics to understand biological processes, such as protein synthesis and the conduction of the nerve

impulse, in chemical and physical terms. Can Mayr really treat biology so as to exclude, for example, physiology and biochemistry, and animal behaviour? Apparently he can, for by biology he really means traditional evolutionary biology. His concern is with the diversity of the biological world. How is it to be understood? The answer, for Mayr, is through the evolution of species, and it is around this that the book is built. Molecular evolution, by contrast, is given only a sideways glance.

A special feature of biology that makes it different from all other sciences, is teleology. There is, in the biological world, the unmistakable sign of purpose. It was perfectly reasonable for Harvey to ask why there are valves in veins, or for Roux to puzzle over why nature had taken so much trouble to construct a complex apparatus to divide the nucleus of the cell at cell division, and so little trouble with the cytoplasm. These are questions about ultimate causes. One cannot ask such questions about glaciers, or the sunrise. What the non-biological sciences are concerned with are proximate causes—the causal mechanisms. Experimental biology, too, is devoted to just such causal analysis. It is the curious feature of biology that, though one can deal with proximate causes of processes of structures without the slightest reference to their function, it can be extremely helpful to make such reference. The two examples just quoted were, historically, helpful in determining one of the nature of the genetic material and the other the circulation of the blood.

The stated approach of Mayr's history is to follow Lord Acton's advice to "study problems, not periods"—to discover for each branch of biology its particular problems and how they were posed, opposed and often solved. The book thus starts with an attempt to place biology and its ideas in historical context. Then follow three main sections. The first of these deals with the diversity of life and its classification, particularly the species problem. The second section is about evolution and has Darwin at its core. (Since animal behaviour is excluded, sociobiology is only touched upon.) The third is about genetics, with Mendel at its core. In each section the history of the related ideas is treated in detail. Finally, there is a short epilogue called "Toward a science of science". The book contains an enormous amount of information and interesting, provocative comment. It presents, at times, a fascinating and lucid account of the growth of particular biological ideas, but at times also it is discursive

and technically difficult. An abridged version could be very widely read. A central theme is that Western thinking has been dominated by the essentialism of Plato and that it was not until the nineteenth century, when essentialism was replaced by population-type thinking, which stresses the uniqueness of everything in the organic world, that evolutionary biology could flower. So long as each species had an immutable essence, the idea of change was not possible. Essentialism emphasized constancy, discontinuity, typology. For Christian, the marvels of nature were the living proof of the work of the Supreme Being. Natural theology revealed in the ways organisms were adapted to their mode of life. This view was also linked to a scale of perfection, which proceeded from the lowest organism, to man at the pinnacle. The scientific revolution in physics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries surprisingly left natural history and systematics untouched, since essentialism persisted.

Mayr draws a distinction between classification and identification schemes. Identification is obviously of great practical value, but classification reflects one's view of nature, and particularly the relationship between organisms. Linnaeus, too, was dominated by essentialist thinking, and for him the genus was the corner-stone of classification. He saw his task as discovering the genera that had been created at the beginning of time.

Mayr is at his most compelling in his account of the development of evolutionary theory and his assessment of Darwin, for whom he has an unrestrained admiration. Lamarck is positively reassessed, as Mayr considers that no one before him had appreciated as clearly the adaptive nature of animal structure. Lamarck introduced time into evolutionary processes, emphasizing the greatness of the earth, and it is unfair that he should be thought of mainly in relation to the discredited theory of the inheritance of acquired characters. There is a detailed analysis of Lyell's uniformitarianism and Mayr suggests that, contrary to T.H. Huxley's view, this was more of a hindrance to the development of evolutionary theory than a help. Lyell played a key role, not only because of his work in geology but because he asked important questions about the extinction of species. He believed in a steady-state world in which lost species had to be replaced by the introduction of new ones.

The origins and development of Darwin's views are topics of almost inexhaustible fascination because there is so much information, such as

diaries and letters, which can be used to construct theories as to how his different ideas arose. How important, for example, was the influence of Malthus? When did Darwin read him? And so on. There is also the amazing story of Wallace arriving independently at the idea of natural selection. Why Darwin and Wallace? Mayr believes that it was because they were students of natural populations, and one cannot over-emphasize the impression made on Darwin by the extreme localization of every island species in the Galapagos. In Mayr's view, the "greatest unifying theory in biology, the theory of evolution, was largely a contribution made by systematics".

Mayr considers that a major obstacle to arriving at the theory of evolution was the fact that evolution cannot be observed directly, like the falling of a stone or the boiling of water. It can only be inferred, from, for example, the fossil evidence. Even more so—and Mayr fails to recognize it—evolution by natural selection is counter-intuitive. Thus he is puzzled by resistance to the theory of the evolution by natural selection. I do not believe that any biologist, no matter how convinced an evolutionist, really finds it easy to understand the actual processes by which animals, with their astonishing adaptiveness, have, in fact, evolved. There are just too many steps. Can one really envisage how the eye, with all its complex structures, arose by "chance" changes that were selected for? It must be a facile biologist who, in his heart of hearts, has no doubts. What persuades the biologist is the overwhelming evidence so clearly marshalled by Mayr, and the absence of an alternative. We may be convinced by the fossil evidence, by the genetics, and by the absence of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, by geographical isolation. We accept, but are we happy?

A reductionist approach is to see evolution in terms of change in gene frequency, whereas Mayr argues that the origin of diversity is now seen as equally important. But what is still not clear is how this diversity is generated. This is related to a central problem that is largely ignored in this book—namely, how is genetic information converted during embryonic development into animal form? It is generally accepted that the genes in the fertilized egg—the genotype—control development, but we still do not know how they do so. Development converts the genotype into the phenotype—that is animals and plants as we see them. Since selection in evolution acts almost exclusively on the phenotype, the process of development is clearly of central importance. To what extent

does development constrain the evolutionary process? This is really a question about what animals and plants are possible. It is usually a false assumption among evolutionary geneticists that any biological form is possible—just change the DNA in an appropriate manner. But there is no evidence that this is true; quite the contrary. It is very difficult to generate certain changes, such as doubling the number of bones in the forearm. And how could the appropriate DNA changes be brought about? One can illustrate the problem as follows: given as much time as required (millions of years) and as many mice as desired, could one design a selection programme so that feathered, winged mice would evolve? Few could select mice so that feathers evolved; it is a measure of our ignorance that we do not know the answer to this problem, which contradicts the impression given by Mayr that all the major problems of evolution are solved.

Particularly for biology, he argues, understanding is achieved more effectively by conceptual advances rather than the discovery of new facts. Biology proceeds by the gradual, but decisive development of new concepts and the abandonment of others. Biology is not sympathetic to Kuhn's idea of scientific revolution: the Darwinian revolution, for example, having been carried out over a large number of years. He claims that there is not a single case in biology where there was a drastic replacement of paradigm between two periods of normal science. This is hard to accept. The revolution that brought about molecular biology might be considered to involve just such a change in paradigm. It is not easy now to realize that as recently as 1947, the great geneticist Muller thought that the chemical role of DNA was to channel energy changes in the cell. Only when the genes and DNA were thought of in terms of information transfer did the revolution in molecular biology begin. Listing the main concepts of the gene, current in the first half of the century, Mayr says "Finally, the gene was viewed by some as a conveyor of highly specific information. In a very specific manner, this idea had been around for a long time. It is such an obvious idea that some author or another must have articulated it specifically before 1953. Yet I did not encounter such a hypothesis in a casual search of the literature." After some 800 pages devoted to a detailed history of evolutionary biology, this is a very disappointing dismissal of the history of the central concept in modern biology.

It, as he writes in his acknowledgements, "All of the essays were commissioned especially for this volume", a more coherent synthesis should have resulted. Yet the first note in C. J. Raven's contribution states: "This essay is part of a larger study of Swift now in preparation." His essay, by far the longest in the collection, is entirely about the mock-heroic style of Swift's verse, with an extended analysis of that intractable and over-explicated poem *Verses on the Death of Doctor Swift*. This essay by Peter Hughes is reprinted from *English Studies* of 1979, and Robert Folkenflik has extracted a section from his own 1978 book on Johnson as biographer. But at least these two, if not especially commissioned, bear directly on the subject promised by the title of the volume.

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end-matter, which makes up nearly a third of the book's total length. Much of *Evolution without Endgame* is a re-telling of Darwin's science career up to the year 1859, and it should be enjoyed by anyone with an interest in either Darwin the man or Darwin the scientist. But it rather falls between two stools, since it also serves as a scholarly contribution to the history of Darwinism, and its price suggests that it is aimed at libraries and a professional readership. Its test, therefore, is: does it really add significantly to what is already known? Does it, as the author hopes to demonstrate, lead to "new" conclusions quite different from those now generally held regarding Darwin and his ideas? The answer, I think, must be that it does not add very much, and does not lead to radically new conclusions.

Dolphins and Porpoises (270pp) with black-and-white illustrations and pages in colour. Robert Hale. £15. 00/0737. X. By Richard Ellis. Published recently as a companion volume to his *Book of Whales*, Ellis describes forty-three species of small cetaceans and his introduction includes a discussion of the problems of nomenclature and classification, as the myths concerning dolphins

The turn of the native

Graham Hough

JOHN LUCAS

Romantic to Modern Literature: Essays and Ideas of Culture 1750-1900 231pp. Brighton: Harvester. £18.95. 07108 0405 9

The time may soon be coming when a book of literary essays will seem the appearance of a vanished cult, like volumes of Victorian sermons. Hence perhaps the slightly defiant air with which John Lucas introduces his collection. But discussion of literature falls naturally into the essay form; and for two hundred years or more, up to and including the present, most readable literary criticism has employed this vehicle rather than the treatise or the monograph—the essay, discrete, free-standing, suggestive rather than exhaustive, with a limited subject and designed to be consumed at a single sitting. These pieces range from Wordsworth to Forster, and they do not suffer from the essay's habitual defect—that of being a mere exhibition of opinion. They all have a ballast of history; and it is to history, character and society that Lucas's study of literature naturally leads. He has no particular axe to grind, but he has a point of view. We could call it roughly

the Orwellian point of view. He assumes, extravagant though it may seem, that novels and poems were written by human beings, and should be judged by their bearing on human affairs; and the nature of literacy concerns him not at all.

He has an alert attention quickly arrested by oddities and anomalies. The radicalism of Dickens's frankly partial exposition of the values of his own class, the longest essay is on W. H. Mallock, author of *The New Republic*, whose satires on the intellectual world hit the headlines in their day but are neither witty enough nor deep enough to carry quite the weight that is put upon them here.

The general direction of Lucas's thinking is plain. Wordsworth is mainly the Wordsworth of Salisbury Plain, and the story of Margaret, Arnold is respectfully but firmly dethroned; and you have to choose. If you choose Arnold, with his devotion to the pure idea and aversion from the sphere of practice, you not only have to reject Dickens, but Cobbett, Carlyle and Ruskin as well. Dickens himself is seen very much as a Radical with strong, buried Toryish roots. And that seems pretty well the position that these essays would endorse. Again one is reminded of Orwell, except that Lucas writes as a professional scholar of English literature, which Orwell never did. The tutelary presence invoked in

the Provincial", quotes Hardy: "Arnold is wrong about provincialism... A certain provincialism of feeling is invaluable. It is the essence of individuality..."

In Lucas's view Arnold is wrong about Dickens too; and his flawed notion of centrality comes out badly against Dickens's frankly partial exposition of the values of his own class. The longest essay is on W. H. Mallock, author of *The New Republic*, whose satires on the intellectual world hit the headlines in their day but are neither witty enough nor deep enough to carry quite the weight that is put upon them here.

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the introduction is the late D. J. Gordon—very much the scholarly historical critic. Lucas pays a generous tribute to him as a brilliant teacher, who assumed in his pupils, and therefore often managed to create, an interest in the life of the mind equal to his own. Learning, a sense of history, and the belief that everyone could profit from the study of literature—these are the qualities that Lucas admires in Gordon; and he would build them up against the know-nothing fatuities of the 1960s and the anti-culture spray-gunning of to-day. If it is the radical who comes to the top in Lucas's social outlook, it is the Tory in his idea of the proper programme for the academy.

I meant to leave the crisis in English studies to rest in peace; but since Lucas raises it explicitly in his introduction and implicitly throughout, we had better have a go at it. Lucas is willing to admit that there probably is a crisis; and puts it down to causes no more complex than the swelling tide of ignorance, and the canonization of ignorance in the name of anti-elitism, personal response or whatever. These attitudes are partly explained, he finds, by justified irritation with the genteel tradition. Maybe so; but Lucas seems to have got into a different time-warps from mine: "If you were a student at university during the 1950s the chances were that you would be taught by old-

style scholars who typically thought of themselves as wine-tasters of literature, and for whom the question of taste could be resolved by the litmus test of whether or not one was a gentleman." I cannot think in what sequestered nook these heirs of Q and Sir Henry Newbolt were still to be found in the 1950s. I was a university student thirty years before that, and even in that legendary period the breathless hush in the close had already been considerably disturbed. And the New Criticism, which appears here as a newly-forged weapon of the 1950s, surely had its heyday fifteen or twenty years earlier, and has been succeeded by three or four subsequent revolutions.

Nothing that happens in English departments of universities merits the name of crisis; but the present unease is real, and has unavoidable causes. It is one of Lucas's strengths that he writes as an Englishman about the culture of his own country, bound to the topics of his discourse by innumerable ties of familiarity and association. So, until well on in this century did most people who wrote about English literature. Now they are in a minority. The vast mass of academic publication in English studies comes from America, from people in whom England was never a physical presence, who have no relation to English culture and no particular need or wish to form one. An English literary education as Lucas instinctively sees it is the history of a continuity, linking the experienced present with the not-quite-vanished past, and making the present more comprehensible in so doing. But over most of the huge English-speaking world it is just a "subject" like any other. Having no roots it is in need of constant theoretical elaboration, and having no boundaries it is constantly expanding to include alien elements that devalue the central core. A much healthier state of affairs, you might say, since it corresponds to the actual state of the world. But something quite different from traditional English studies, and greatly in need of some principle of order and some criterion of value, if it is not to slip out into a debilitating mish-mash. These reflections are not explicit in Professor Lucas's book, but they authentically arise from it.

Questions of origination

David Snow

BARRY G. GALE

Evolution Without Evidence: Charles Darwin and The Origin of Species 238pp. Brighton: Harvester. £18.95. 07108 0442 3

In 1838 Charles Darwin read Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population* and, in his own words, "being well prepared to appreciate the struggle for existence which everywhere goes on from long-continued observations of the habits of animals and plants, it at once struck me that under these circumstances favourable variations would tend to be preserved, and unfavourable ones to be destroyed. . . . Here, then, I had at last got a theory by which to work." Recent historians have recognized the crucial importance of this event in the long and complex gestation of *The Origin of Species*, a process which lasted for a quarter of a century, from Darwin's visit to Patagonia and the Galapagos Islands to the publication of *The Origin* in 1859. Indeed it is one of the few really clear landmarks; the working out of most of the other essential elements of the synthesis of

1859 was altogether more hesitant and tentative. Historians have, it seems, tended in consequence to treat Darwin's reading of Malthus not as an early but important landmark passed in a long journey but as actually marking the end of the journey, the point at which Darwin had his theory of evolution substantially complete. This, at least, is Barry Gale's contention, and he aims to set the record straight.

He stresses how very incomplete Darwin's knowledge of biology still was in 1838, even by contemporary standards, and how long and arduous were his efforts to amass the necessary evidence for his theory. Gale documents, with a wealth of quotations from Darwin's correspondence, the uncertainties that had to be overcome before he felt able to present his theory to the public, and how through force of circumstances the book finally published was an abridged version, rather hastily prepared, of a longer and more thorough work which never appeared. But in his effort to make an original contribution to the thriving industry of "Darwin studies" Gale surely goes too far.

To call the book *Evolution without Evidence* is a considerable overstatement of what Gale considers the weakness of Darwin's work, and I suspect that he has been tempted by an

eye-catching title. Parts of his thesis are true enough, but others before Gale have made the same points. Darwin was at a very early stage in the development of his theory when he read Malthus, and twenty years later he was still left with many weak points and areas of ignorance, on which he was open to attack. Gale makes the point that Darwin lacked, almost totally, any "direct" evidence, which seems to mean that he lacked evidence of evolutionary change being actually observed, or of fossil series showing unequivocal evidence of organisms changing gradually through geological time. But it is hard to know what direct evidence Darwin could have had. Even now there are not many cases of evolutionary changes being observed and measured, and most are very minor ones; and few series of fossils that show changes can be proved without any doubt to belong to a single evolving lineage. The apparent stability of most species, and the slow rise to the suggestion that most evolutionary change may take place relatively rapidly in small populations. Darwin's difficulties were ones that he could not possibly have over come. What he eventually produced was a theory so strongly supported by all the indirect evidence, and which made so much better sense of the facts of nature

than rival theories such as Creationism, that it has stood the test of time. It is obviously of the greatest interest to investigate the development of Darwin's thought, since *The Origin of Species* revolutionized our view of the world and ourselves, but one cannot avoid the impression that the Darwin industry, as it may be called, is entering the period of diminishing returns. Gale refers to 130 books and papers dealing primarily with Darwin's work leading to *The Origin*, all but seventeen of them published since 1959, the centenary year, and he is much concerned not just with what Darwin thought and wrote but with what other Darwin scholars have written about it. "I think I probably agree with Greene's overall assessment of Ghiselin's book. . . . I would maintain that Ghiselin commits Himmelfarb's mistake, but in the opposite direction. . . . I have been impressed by Susan F. Cannon's rethinking of Darwin's period of long delay. . . . Gruber's idea of Darwin's not points in which the general reader, even one with a strong interest in Darwin and evolution, is likely to be very interested; and the non-professional reader may be put off by the bulky apparatus of notes and other

end-matter, which makes up nearly a third of the book's total length.

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Standing centre-stage

Robert Halsband

ROBERT FOLKENFLIK (Editor)

The English Hero, 1660-1800 220pp. University of Delaware Press. (Associated University Presses). £14.50. 07413 174 X.

The excellent index to this collection of essays lists among the entries for *Hero* as builder; as colonizer or colonized; as father figure or tormented child; Christian; classical; comic hero; culture hero; domesticated; existential; Gothic hero-villain; Herculean hero; lack of consensus about; literary; military; of mind (see about Johnson's heroes); poet; etc.; "See also Anti-hero; Heroic; Heroines". The term *hero* thus embraces a bewildering multitude of meanings, some of them contradictory, others strained or faddish, few of them simple. In spite of the editor's attempt to integrate or unify them in his introduction he hardly succeeds.

If, as he writes in his acknowledgements, "All of the essays were commissioned especially for this volume", a more coherent synthesis should have resulted. Yet the first note in C. J. Raven's contribution states: "This essay is part of a larger study of Swift now in preparation." His essay, by far the longest in the collection, is entirely about the mock-heroic style of Swift's verse, with an extended analysis of that intractable and over-explicated poem *Verses on the Death of Doctor Swift*. This essay by Peter Hughes is reprinted from *English Studies* of 1979, and Robert Folkenflik has extracted a section from his own 1978 book on Johnson as biographer. But at least these two, if not especially commissioned, bear directly on the subject promised by the title of the volume.

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eighteenth century, and should not be overlooked.

If Folkenflik's collection suffers, then, from being unfocused and short-sighted, it contains several notably good essays. That by Hughes, wittily entitled "Wars within Doors: Erosic Heroism in Eighteenth-Century Literature", develops the thesis that the militia heroisms of the age were transformed, during that period, into the heroism arising from erotic conflict. Honour, the standard aristocratic principle, gave way to the "republican principle of virtue", while (in parallel movement) tragedy, epic and heroic epistle, which were based on honour, were replaced by satire, history and the novel, which were based on virtue. The "conquests of the sword and siege train" turned inward to those of the "phallus and erotic intrigue". This piquant exposition, if not entirely persuasive, is presented with a dazzling display of examples from both French and English literature.

A contrast, and excellent in its own way, Robert Hume's brief essay "Concepts of the Hero in Comic Drama, 1660-1710" disentangles the unheroic protagonists of Restoration comedy, which he characterizes as being far from monolithic. (This principle of discrimination underlies Hume's 1976 book on late seventeenth-century drama.) A plain, blunt style lends force to his commonsensical divisions of the four general types of comic heroes, from the savagely satirized ones to the exemplary ones, in the movement that led to sentimental comedy.

The same kind of bracing scepticism and analytic scalpel is used by W. B. Carnochan to strip away the verbal layers of Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*; or, *The Power of Music*. Not surprisingly, the hero of that ode to St Cecilia, patroness of music, is not the military commander but Timotheus the musician, whose weapon is the lyre. With that he subdued his master to become the poet-hero.

The opening essay, John William Johnson's "England, 1660-1800: An Age without a Hero?", is a free-wheeling survey that leaves its title-question with a bewildering number of answers. Occasionally he is short on precision, as when he asserts that William III was the last English monarch to be painted wearing armour (an assertion echoed by the editor); he overlooks the armoured portraits of

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prim, formal figure, ill-paid, ill-rewarded, ill-married, given to bouts of depression, accidie, and destructive self-criticism. Professors, as one of them insisted in *l'Oeuvre* of 1913, "are their own worst enemies... their indifference, apathy, slackness, cowardice, impotence and fear of action condemn them to be skinned, plucked, fleeced and exploited."

Those who could do so, escaped: to business, to public and private administrations, to banks, the foreign service, parliament, politics. Guiral and Thuillier make the point that, unless they themselves become politicians, as so many have done, professors are not really political animals, but elitists too interested in talent selection and rational discourse to thrive in an unselective, egalitarian democracy that has little time for their educational ideals and little sympathy for their anarchistic allegiance to meritocracy. Yet, having said this, they conclude that the true inspiration and succour of our trade is pleasure: "retiens le mot joie" they say (and I agree). As I agree with Jules Renard advising the *lycéens* of Nevers, where he had once lived the life of Poil de Carotte: "Love your teachers blindly. You'll judge them later."

Back to the *Histoire générale*, whose Volume Four, in the competent hands of Antoine Prost, spends as many pages on the half-century since 1930 as Rousché devotes to some two thousand years. It isn't only the plethora

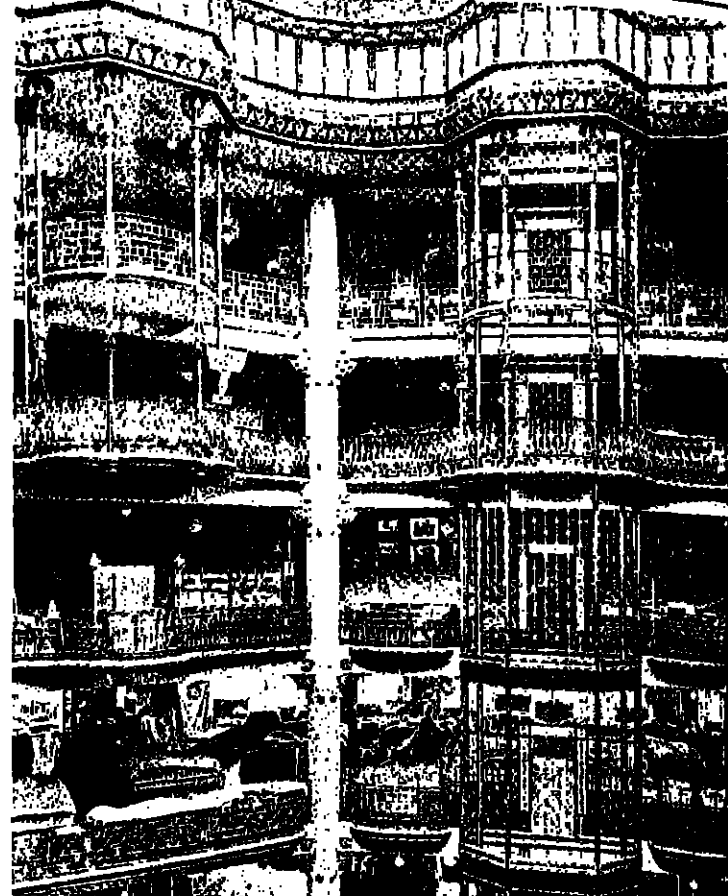
documentation, or our natural interest in contemporary goings-on: it is that, really, more has changed in a few decades than had over centuries. In 1930, all schools and universities, private and public, accounted for less than 5 million young people; by the late 1970s, these numbered 13.3 million. There were more university students in 1978 than there had been secondary students in 1948. Most of the plant and personnel of France's four-score universities have been added in the past twenty years when, for a while, the education budget took up one third of public expenditure, as much as Defence and Health together, employing nearly a million persons to teach over 13 million more, marking all society with their rhythms (the calendar of school holidays) and their values (courses, diplomas).

When the scale is great enough, a change in quantity can mean a change in quality. The soaring scale of educational enterprise has meant an unprecedented degree of bureaucratization, formalization, *planification*, and what is still called, contrary to all evidence, rationalization. The exceptional has become banal; its generalization has made for superficiality and, to a degree, devaluation. School has become a major machine for social, but not necessarily cultural, selection. A new illiteracy replaces the old or, rather, maintains, older degrees of illiteracy behind the pretence of formal

instruction. In Victor Duruy's day, in the 1860s, one third of children attending elementary school left it not knowing, or hardly knowing, how to read or write. Why should things be much different now? We know that the number of illiterate conscripts has been on the rise since 1900 or so. The functionally illiterate may well inherit the earth. Why not? An early page of Volume Four carries a 1975 photograph of a school wall with a large inscription:

LYCÉE SINISTRÉ
FABRIQUE DE CHÔMEURS

As brief prosperity wanes, disinterested culture appears less exciting. But professional training can turn out almost as aleatory. Education that is long isn't necessarily high; let alone much of an education. The idea of a fixed intellectual capital on whose revenues one can live out one's life has gone the way of the economy that justified it. The struggle between tradition and novelty has itself become a slightly discredited tradition. The future which Western mankind briefly regarded as predictable, and almost surely better, now wears a darker hue. But if, indeed, general culture cannot teach us much today, at least it can console. And excellent volumes like these can place present experience in the rather unexpected perspective of a past where violence, illiteracy, misery, insecurity and disorder were also – and more so – the norm of everyday life.



Lifts not to be missed: in René Binet's Grand Hall added to the Grand Magasins du Printemps; a 1911 photograph reproduced in Rosalind H. Williams's *Dream Worlds*, reviewed below.

Compound existences

Richard Griffiths

MICHAEL SUTTON
Nationalism, Positivism and Catholicism
325pp. Cambridge University Press.
£25. 0 521 22868 9

"Les procédés d'argumentation régulière donnent l'illusion de la méthode scientifique. C'est un magnifique symptôme d'activité intellectuelle, mais il ne mène nulle part... Mauraas a résolu d'avancer le problème politique; avec sa fermeté et sa douce insistance, il a l'air de raisonner librement; mais il n'a pas le droit de se laisser convaincre." Barrès's comment on Mauraas's political philosophy has elements of truth in it; what Michael Sutton's new study shows us, however, is that for Mauraas, in the early stages at least, intellectual activity may have preceded the adoption of convictions.

The espousal by the Action Française of the cause of the Catholic Church in France at the time of the Separation of Church and State, and of the inventories, has often been seen as the cynical choice of a battleground which would attract to its side many from the beleaguered Catholic camp. After all, the Dreyfus Affair, which had been the original *raison d'être* of the movement, had run its course; the Action Française was seeking new causes and new alliances. Alongside the appeal to Catholics, in the period 1905-14, one finds two other tactics: one, a "social" policy of a radical nature, aimed at some kind of loose alliance with the syndicalists; the other, a concentration on foreign affairs and on the German threat. The war was to consecrate this second policy, and after it the Catholic and nationalist strains in Action Française policy, combined with an appeal to the property-owning classes, succeeded in consigning to oblivion the radical social stance of the pre-war period.

Was the appeal to Catholics, on the part of a movement headed by a self-confessed agnostic, pure opportunism? Mr Sutton convincingly shows that, in part at least, it was based on tendencies already present in Mauraas's thought. The young Mauraas, full of doubts in relation to his early Catholic upbringing, had, about 1890, "turned his back on any quest for inner metaphysical certainty and looked instead to some action-oriented idea of social or collective experience as a refuge from his own consciousness of being subject to determinism". Strangely, he found this refuge in a particular view of the Positivism of Auguste Comte. Comte's "subjective synthesis" had shown that "the coexistence and dignity of every individual being have always been due

to his subordination to some compound existence". Where Comte had chosen Humanity as his supreme collectivity, however, Mauraas substituted for it *la patrie*. As early as 1898, he had been calling for a political alliance between Positivists and Catholics (basing himself upon a wild idea put forward by Comte himself in his *Appel aux conservateurs*). From this perspective, developments in the pre-war period can perhaps be seen as part of a considered policy, and not merely as opportunism.

Is this the whole truth, however? Sutton argues against Simon's view that "Mauraas cared nothing about the scientific sub-structure of Comte's system, borrowing only those of Comte's political, social and religious ideas that suited his purposes", on the grounds (a) that Mauraas's debt was far from limited to the occasional idea culled from Comte's system to serve already defined purposes, and (b) that this influence was "prior to the crystallization of his own political doctrine". There is some truth in both these statements, but against them could be set the fact (admitted by Sutton) that Mauraas's view of

Positivism was distorted in order to fit his own particular needs (the same needs that produced his nationalism), and that "what in fact he meant by a Positivist appears to have amounted to little more than a person who... was disposed to eschew the temptation of individualism and to give a primacy in his life and thought to a past-orientated idea of France... that did not diverge widely... from Mauraas's own". The proposed alliance, moreover, was based mainly on shared hatreds, rather than on a real community of positive interests; above all, on an abiding distaste for individualism "in all its perverse manifestations".

Mauraas was concerned with the practicalities of politics, and to this extent, the positivist aspect of the proposed alliance was a justification rather than a reality. Once the real-life alliance existed, the need for theoretical justification became less urgent. Léon de Montesquiou, the leading Positivist of the Action Française, did indeed, as holder of the Chaire Auguste Comte, give lectures on Comte at the Institut d'Action Française, but only in 1906 and 1907. The attention of the rest of the

movement lay elsewhere.

One of the fascinations of this book, however, lies in its treatment of the theoretical argument as it was pursued in Catholic circles, and above all in the controversy between the Jesuit Deogans and the religious philosophers, Maurice Blondel and Labeurionnière. This controversy is laid before us in all its detail. Beneath the theological and philosophical points, beneath the diverse use of authorities, one can see the differing attitudes of the protagonists themselves to the Church's role in a secular society. This debate tells us more about the Church than about the Action Française.

Mauraas himself, after his famous passage of arms with Marc Sangnier in 1904-5, did not participate in this further debate until its final stages, in 1912-13. His contribution was, as might be expected, simplistic and defensive; much of it was taken up with the explanation and defence of certain of his earlier statements, whose anti-Christian import was pointed in the debate, he now wished to attenuate. The theological complexities of the theoretical debate were irrelevant to

him. As Sutton remarks: "Mauraas's irritable reaction... may very well have marked his fear that the Action Française's role in the national revival... might be compromised by retrospective Catholic criticism of the nature of his defence of the Church some years earlier."

Practicalities were more important to Mauraas than theory, despite his claim for the "intellectualism" of his movement. It is significant that the earlier disagreement with Sangnier had rapidly switched from an examination of the compatibility of Mauraas's Positivist ideas with Christianity, to the question of "the relevance of Sangnier's democratic aspirations to the current state of French society". Mr Sutton's excellent study of a debate which had, until now, lacked a proper critical examination, tells us a great deal about the tension between theory and practice in Mauraas, a tension caused by the fact that "the founding ideologue of the Action Française was no solitary scholar engaged in real life limited discovery, but a journalist and polemicist who took up the ideas of his time and reshaped them to his own taste and purpose".

It is true that the dust-jacket asserts that the book is not merely intended for "historians of technology... students of modern cultural history... economists and sociologists" but "above all [it] is addressed to ordinary consumers who need the need for the clarification of values." Even so, the most ordinary of consumers will scarcely feel flattered by the low level of knowledge, intelligence – and imagination that these pages assume in the reader. Commonplace observations are subjected to laborious explanation, and the descriptions of "consumer lifestyles" are delivered in prose that comes perilously close at times to that of popular scientific romance. This is a pity, since Rosalind Williams does herself and her chapter a substantial injustice.

She writes dismissively of "the risk to quantify aggregate consumer demand", yet a major shortcoming of her account of "the consumer revolution" is the absence of any serious discussion of the increase in real incomes that made it possible. She is also handicapped by the limits of her knowledge of the broader intellectual movements to which her chosen thinkers were heirs; for example, her concluding panegyric on Gabriel Tarde's monological version of "solidarity" ignores the fact that Gabriel Eliot and other writers had been saying much the same thing thirty years earlier.

These various additions constitute more than half the book, and might have been written by a different person for an entirely different readership. It

First and lesser Intelligences

Julian Baldick

SHARBUDDIN YAHYA
SUHRAWARDI
The Mystical and Visionary Treatises
Translated by W. M. Thackston, Jr.
118pp. Octagon Press. £7.50.
0 90060 95 2

This is a publication of considerable importance: the first readable English translation of the finest examples of Persian prose literature, the symbolic narratives of Islam's most colourful and imaginative philosopher, the Andalusian mystic Suhrawardi, martyred by Saladin in 1191 at the age of thirty-six. Unfortunately, while W. M. Thackston Jr's translation is usually faithful enough, his introduction, albeit serious in its meticulous attention to detail, is marred by confusion on a crucial point. Here elucidation of an aspect of doctrine not only proves essential to an understanding of the treatises themselves, but is also a necessary preliminary to examination of the circumstances surrounding Suhrawardi's execution, and of a sharp contrast of traditions within Islam.

I must begin, however, by noting a minor error in the analysis of Treatise I, Suhrawardi's Persian translation of the well-known "Epistle of the Birds" by Avicenna (d. 1037). Dr Thackston takes the king reached by the birds at the end of their journey to be the First or Universal Intelligence, the entity nearest to God in Avicenna and Suhrawardi's systems. But the king must be God, as is shown by the parallel descriptions in Avicenna's *Revelation of Hayy ibn Yaqdhan*, where the context permits no doubt. Here confusion may have been caused by the fact that the bird reaches one mountain before traversing eight more, so that the mountains symbolize all nine heavens, not just eight as Thackston states.

But it is in the analysis – of Suhrawardi's original compositions that the major confusion appears. In the second treatise, "The Sound of Gabriel's Wing", the author encounters ten old men, representing the Ten Intelligences. The lowest, the Tenth or Active Intelligence who rules the sublunary region, becomes his instructor, and explains that God has several Great Words, including the first, which is the Highest, and that the last is Gabriel. The Highest must represent the First Intelligence, while Gabriel is the Tenth. Elsewhere, in his systematic expositions of his philosophy, Suhrawardi explicitly identifies the Tenth Intelligence with Gabriel and the Holy Spirit, making it clear that all three are different names for one entity. Here the translator, doubtless misled by the confusing circumstance that the Tenth Intelligence now speaks about himself as Gabriel in the third person, identifies Gabriel with the First Intelligence. Thus, assuming an unnecessary inversion of perspective, which the context makes impossible, he translates the word for "last" as "first" when the text identifies the last Word with the Holy Spirit.

As Thackston remarks, in each treatise a guide or initiator appears: but he fails to observe that the "Red Intelligence" who appears as the guide in Treatise III is again Gabriel, the Active, Tenth Intelligence of the sublunary realm, as is shown by his communication with the narrator on a sublunary level, and his statement that he has been thrown into a black pit.

In Treatise IV, "A Day with a Group of Sufis", the author shows himself sitting with members of the main mystical movement within Islam, Sufism. Everyone present speaks of his "master". Probably, in the narrator's case, this is Gabriel again: in the philosophical school of "Oriental Illumination" founded by Suhrawardi the Tenth Intelligence is the guide, as opposed to the living, human masters of the Sufis. In Treatise V, "On the State of Childhood", Gabriel is recognizable again, as "an old man wearing an iridescent cloak, half black, which was white and half black". That this is Gabriel is clear from the parallel

descriptions in Treatises II and III, where he is depicted as turned on one side towards light, and on the other towards darkness.

In Treatise VI, "On the Reality of Love", we encounter a "young old man" called "Eternal Wisdom". Again Thackston makes an identification with the First Intelligence. This is impossible, because the figure stands before a city above which are several other cities: one cannot encounter the Highest Intelligence at this lower level. Here the figure must be the Tenth Intelligence again, in a different perspective: he appears "above" the nine heavens, not in a physical sense, but as the lowest figure encountered when one transfers to a superior world. Treatise IX, "A Tale of Occidental Exile", shows the visionary ascending to his "father". Thackston translates mutually contradictory glosses explaining the "father" as "Universal Intellect" and "Universal Soul". These explanations are also equally impossible, since the "father" speaks of his own father and other ancestors. Elsewhere in his work Suhrawardi presents the Tenth Intelligence as "our father" and "the holy father", being the "Lord of the Human Species". The presence of the Water of Life at the level of the narrator's "father" and at that of the "young old man" in Treatise VI shows that they are the same.

All this was simply demonstrated, with overwhelming arguments and easily verified documentation and references, by the late Henry Corbin, in the rich analyses accompanying his French translations of these treatises (*L'Archange empourpré*, 1976). One must, however, admit that Corbin's highly individualistic style and technical vocabulary make his work extremely difficult for most readers to follow.

Thackston's conclusions concerning Suhrawardi's martyrdom sound conventional enough: he imputes it to "the wrath of the orthodox *ulama* [Doctors of the Law], for whom his ideas, like those of the married al-Farabi [the Sufi, d. 922] before him, represented a dangerous espousal of

immediate cognition of God, a doctrine they were not prepared to accept". If we explore more deeply, however, we observe that Sufism, with its doctrine of immediate cognition of God as central to its theory and practice, was extremely acceptable at this time. The reigning caliph, al-Nasir (1180-1225), the religious leader of Islam in Baghdad, was soon to use Sufism as part of his effort to revive the caliphate's influence. One Sufi leader became the caliph's principal propagandist and ambassador to the Muslim world. What was entirely unacceptable was the philosophical tradition, to which Suhrawardi belonged. This tradition, as we have seen, emphasized not an immediate cognition of God, but a cognition strongly mediated by the Tenth Intelligence. In Sufism, on the other hand, the Sufi master is on the level of the First, Universal Intelligence: thus he can commune with God without mediation. It is perhaps this Sufi emphasis on the Universal Intelligence that accounts for the confusion noted above.

Thackston's statement that "one cannot say of these two intellectual orientations that the one is foreign to the other" is also conventional enough, and would command widespread assent; but we must continue to look at the background. To be sure, Sufism was heavily indebted to the Greek philosophical tradition for its ideas, and some writers, like Suhrawardi himself, could write in both disciplines (Treatises VII and VIII contain plenty of Sufi content, specifically presented as such) or attempt a synthesis. But to the majority of Sufis philosophy was literally foreign because it was Greek, and they would savagely mock the philosophers as purveyors of Greek ideas alien to Islam. This is a constant theme of the Sufi poetry of the period. They would also mock the philosophers for concentrating their efforts on the Active Intelligence instead of God. The caliph's Sufi ambassador wrote a book against Greek philosophy and personally obliterated ten volumes of Avicenna's

works. The caliph's own hostility was notorious: in 1192, in Baghdad, a public inquisition burned a collection of philosophical books. If we turn to Syria, where Saladin reigned as temporal ruler while professing allegiance to the caliph as the highest religious authority, we find that he too detested philosophers, but would shew a Sufi visitor with gifts.

Moreover, Suhrawardi's opponents in Aleppo, the Doctors of the Law who asked Saladin to order his execution, would have been most offended by his claim to be instructed by Gabriel. For in Islam Gabriel is the Angel of Revelation, and revelation is held to have ended with Muhammad. A contemporary source records that the jurists condemned Suhrawardi for insisting on God's power to create a prophet at will, and for claiming to be assisted by the "World of Sovereignty"; his own works show him attributing such "assistance" to Gabriel. His adoring biographer, Shahrazāri (fl. 1280), whose account is translated by Thackston, says that he had heard false reports that Suhrawardi knew the mysterious science called *simiya*. This is not "alchemy" (*kīmiya*), but means here, as in other biographical sources, the production of visual illusions. Shahrazāri also says that he has heard that some of Suhrawardi's disciples called him "Messenger of God" (scandalous, if true – this is replaced in the translation by what seems an unconvincing reconstruction of the text).

It should also be mentioned that Suhrawardi's glorification of ancient Iranian kings in a treatise dedicated to an Anatolian prince, a work available to his accusers, would have shown the Doctors of the Law their habitual enemy: the Persian monarchical tradition, presented by an adviser to temporal rulers. But here further elaboration is unnecessary. The strictures I have made are not to be taken as reflecting upon the quality of the rest of the volume. Dr Thackston deserves our gratitude for an extremely useful and well-annotated translation.

Re-reading Jane

The memorial to Jane Austen in Winchester Cathedral reads, in part, as follows: "The benevolence of her heart, the sweetness of her temper, and the extraordinary endowments of her mind obtained the regard of all who knew her and the warmest love of her intimate connections." No mention is made of her novels.

To women in contemporary voices and dislocation she is closely invisible, almost an annoyance. Why do we turn to her sampler squares for solace? Nothing she saw was free of snobbery or class. Yet the needlework of those needle eyes... We are pricked to tears by the justice of hot violence: Emma on Box Hill, rude to poor Miss Bates. By Mr. Knightley's Were she your equal in situation – But consider how far this is from being the case. Shamed into compassion, and in shame, a grace.

Or wicked Wickham and selfish pretty Willoughby. Their vice, pure envy which, displacing love, defiled the honour marriages should be made of. She punished them with very silly wives. Novels of manners? Hymenal theology! Six little circles of hell with attendant humours. For what do we live but to make sport for our neighbours. And laugh at them in our turn? The philosophy. Faded at the door of Mr. Bennet's century. The Garden of Eden goes on in the grounds of Pemberley.

The amazing epitaph's 'benevolence of heart' Precedes 'the extraordinary endowments of her mind' And would have pleased her, who was not unkind. Dear votary of order, sense, clear art. And irresistible fun, please pluck out lives. Outside self-pity, we have wrapped them in. And show us how, absurd we seem to you. You know the mischief poetry could do. And when Anne Elliot spoke of its misfortune To be seldom safely enjoyed by those who Enjoyed it completely, the spoke for you.

Anne Stevenson

UP 11.15.80

